

REACHING OUR CHILDREN: A MODEL TO IMPROVE GRADE  
LEVEL READING AMONG LOW INCOME CHILDREN  
THROUGH ENGAGEMENT OF SCRIPTURE

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO  
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Dayton, Ohio

May, 2015

**United Theological Seminary  
Dayton, Ohio**

**Faculty Approval Page  
Doctor of Ministry Final Project**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **REACHING OUR CHILDREN: A MODEL TO IMPROVE GRADE LEVEL READING AMONG LOW INCOME CHILDREN THROUGH ENGAGEMENT OF SCRIPTURE**

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The objective of this project is to improve grade level reading through the engagement of scripture in the context of Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church (CMBC), Newport, Kentucky, a low income school district. CMBC has struggled to engage young children in their Sunday school program, children were observed to have poor reading skills. The hypothesis is that through the engagement of scripture children will improve their grade level reading. Methodology used to measure the findings was qualitative research design. Pre and post survey questionnaire, data triangulation of stake holders, a four week curriculum consisting of a ninety hour session was used.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First and foremost to the Holy Spirit, my teacher, who kept me focused on spiritual things; guiding and instructing me in Truth when I was often tempted to follow man's plan for my document. Thank You LORD! There were many people who helped to perfect this document and/or the project model. Thank you, Isaiah Morgan, Larry Morgan Jr., Dr. Rychie Breidenstein, Dr. Leroy Cothran, Dr. John Edmerson, Dr. Tina Rae Collins, Karen Truman-Minute Press, Dr. Sandra L. Weston-Sisterhood, Ella Frye, Summit Church: Jeannette P. Maxey, Renuka Devadason, Donna Painter, Douwene Buchanan, Sharon Hammer, Margaretta DeMoss, Jenny Guin, The three church Elder, and Minister Buchanan, who worked diligently with me during the development stage of the model; to the kind and patient staff at the Newport, Kentucky Public Library. Thanks to Caryn Dalton, Mark Candy and all the UTS librarians for your patience, care, and guidance. Rev. Sharon Carter, K Love F M radio hosts in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Lisa Shewmon, NKU, initial encouragement, to all the speakers who taught and instructed during my doctoral intensives from August 2011-January 2015; through note taking under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and repetitive listening to the audio CD's I was able to comprehend the core teaching, which was needed to complete my document. Finally, a genuine thank you to all who allowed me to share my project with you, giving me your listening ear, helpful insight, spiritual revelation, and constructive feedback.

## **DEDICATION**

To God who provided me the revelation, passion and burden to help our school age children to improve their grade level reading. To my four sons, LaValle, Larry, Steven, and Isaiah, and to all of my grandchildren who initially helped me to see the need of the model for the children of our nation. To all the children of the community that assisted in my project, and to all the children who will benefit from this model.

## **INTRODUCTION**

A major national concern today regards the large number of children who cannot read at grade level by the end of third grade. The long-term implications of this tragedy, including the high school drop rate and the subsequent toll taken on the nation's economy, are hot topics of discussion. This problem was not a major interest to the researcher until it hit home. She was driving with several of her grandchildren in the car, having a general conversation, and her eight-year-old granddaughter stated that she was not going to graduate from high school. The child went on to expound that school was too hard for her and the teachers did not understand her. That conversation captured the author's full attention. Initially, she was shocked. At eight years old, how could this child envision such an idea? Where would she get this kind of thinking? Sometimes children are influenced by people in authority. Somewhere in the educational process she heard it said, "No point in you going forward." How many other children have heard similar words or felt the same frustration, but have not spoken their thoughts outwardly? How many innocent children are acting out in school because they have given up? How many will be pushed through the system without being given help to reach their full potential?

It was the author's granddaughter's silent struggle of illiteracy that provoked her to write this document. Children are conditioned to believe what people say. The researcher can attest to that statement from her personal experience. She is reminded that she never read at grade level, and she recalls many harsh comments from teachers referring to her poor writing, even in college. She was graduated from high school at the



age of sixteen; however, she was six-months pregnant at the time. Several authority figures wished her well and encouraged her to get a job; but not one person thought it might be advantageous for her to think about continuing her education and enrolling in junior college.

The model in this thesis is designed to educate parents, schools, churches, communities, and local businesses about a project implemented to improve grade level reading among low-income children through the engagement of the Scriptures. The author intends to help her granddaughter and the many low-income children across America who are not reading at grade level. When it comes to the demographics of low-income children, the research suggests that on average families need an income of about twice the federal poverty threshold to meet their most basic needs. Children living in families with incomes below this level — \$46,566 for a family of four in 2012— are referred to as low income.<sup>1</sup>

According to Literacy Statistics, two-thirds of students who cannot read by the end of fourth grade end up in jail or on welfare.<sup>2</sup> In addition the report states that

85 percent of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate. More than 60 percent of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate. Illiteracy and crime are closely related as over 70% of inmates in America's prisons cannot read above the fourth grade level. Three out of four food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels. Sixteen to nineteen year old girls at the poverty and below with average skills are six times more likely to have out of wedlock children than their reading counterparts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>National Center for Children in Poverty (ncpp.org) National Demographic Profiles (accessed March 3, 2015).

<sup>2</sup><http://begintoread.com/research/literacystatistics.html> (accessed March 16, 2015).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

The researcher worked for two decades in the social services profession in many capacities, including working individually with children and their family members as an educator. Throughout the years, she had read several newspaper articles about children's not reading at grade level and the future social implications. She did not, however, give much attention to the data as she always felt these children would eventually catch up and get on track; after all, she didn't read at grade level throughout her school years, yet today she loves to read.

After doing extensive research on the subject of proficiency and the consequences that befall children who are not proficient in reading, the author had a decision to make. She knew she could not quit her job because she had financial obligations; however, her entrepreneurial spirit started to wake up. She had a window of three months to initiate her doctoral project, which she decided to tweak in order to address the issue of improving grade level reading.

Contacting the Covington, Kentucky, Rekindle program for small businesses, the researcher went through an accelerated program to start a small business, developing a budget to include a salary for herself and two part-time qualified employees. Newport School District approved the project model; and the author reached out to several teachers at the intermediate school to acquire information and a possible list of students who were in need of improving their reading skills to enroll in the project.

After completing a food training session, Highland Ave. Methodist Church agreed to provide lunch and an afternoon snack at no cost to the researcher or the students because the students to be served lived in a low-income neighborhood that met the guidelines for free or reduced lunch. The researcher partnered with a church that had a

desire to operate a Sunday School but had been unsuccessful in their efforts to keep children enrolled. The church offered space at a cost that was out of the author's budget; however, she was confident the financial support from the community and additional fundraising would make up for the difference.

With a plan of action in place, the author resigned from her professional employment, in good standing, and developed her doctoral project model, a summer reading project to assist students who were not reading at grade level. This reading improvement would be implemented through the engagement of the Scriptures. As the researcher shared her project with her cohort group and mentors, they were able to help articulate her passion and the correlation to engage the students through Scriptures to improve their grade level reading. It was the Holy Spirit who revealed that this project was not a coincidence, but this engagement with children and the Scriptures would be the author's call.

The key to reading and comprehension is a combination of patience, nurturing, and learning made fun. The writer believes that if a student is not having fun or is not interested in the reading material, learning will be diminished and the child will not be interested in continuing to read.

Research continually reflects that the third grade is a vital milestone for all students. A quick Google search using the words "Third grade reading" reveals that the consequences to children who cannot read proficiently can be overwhelming. The question to ask is, "Why is a large percentage of low-income children not reading at a high level?" An article written in tribute to Rudolf Flesch noted:

According to Flesch, we are wired to talk by age three, write by age five, and read by age seven, roughly speaking. These things happen naturally, with time and

encouragement. Learning to talk, he notes, is a far greater intellectual leap than learning to read. But what do you know—three-year-olds do it. Similarly, seven-year-olds will almost universally learn to read, if you don't put obstacles in their way. An inability to read is rare among humans; you would expect to find actual brain damage. The evil genius of look-say is that it creates the symptoms of brain damage in healthy children. Here's a grim but probably accurate thought. If our educators were teaching children to talk, we would have a society overflowing with mutes. As it is, we have a society overflowing with "functional illiterates."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this thesis the author will discuss feedback from various authors, as well as the social implications and ripple effects that accompany the child not reading at grade level. Personal illustrations from the researcher's professional career working with "at risk" children and their family members will also be provided (being cognizant of confidentiality).

Chapter One of this project will provide a summary of why the model to improve grade level reading among low-income children through the engagement of Scriptures was selected by the researcher. The contribution of the spiritual autobiography will bring insight as the author's spiritual story is shared to express how God moved in her life. The context, the setting where her project was implemented, giving insight as to what occurred and showing how problem areas needing to be addressed were determined, will provide a concrete example of the efficacy of the researcher's ideas and concepts. Finally, the synergy from the writer's own personal experience of how the three connect and the sole reasons for executing this model will be explained.

Chapter Two, "The State of the Art," will offer material resources relative to the use of the Scriptures or Bible stories to enhance reading skills. Although numerous teaching models and approaches can be used to enhance the reading skills of children of

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.improve-education.org/id29.html> (Accessed April 4, 2015)

low income, the use of Bible stories will be demonstrated to show how this model can be considered as another effective tool. This chapter will provide a glimpse at the most recent materials, methods, and approaches (some of which is controversial) to teach children and discuss whether they have improved reading skills.

Chapter Three outlines the foundation for the thesis of this project model, which argues that children can improve grade level reading through the engagement of the Scriptures. The biblical, historical, and theological foundations will be brought to the mind of the reader and elucidate the importance of Bible stories in the tool box of reading enhancement models, clarifying how this tool has been successful in the past and can be used today with the same good results. The utilization of scholarly material written by other theologians is only vaguely presented in the formation of the biblical, historical, and theological foundation. This is due to the continuous evolution and enhancement of the present reading model, which renders it a difficult task to find recent and current models of the use of Bible stories to enhance reading skills. However, research within this model suggests that using the Scriptures to teach reading does work.

Chapter Four explains the methodology of the model and design used. It also provides data collected to prove the hypothesis and presents the pre- and post-test questionnaires that were utilized.

Chapter Five, "Field Experience," describes and records what actually happened throughout the duration of the project. Feedback from students and testimonials are documented.

Chapter Six, "Reflection, Summary and Conclusion," presents the outcome of the project, including the identification of challenges and project limitations. The project

dialogues how the model can be replicated in various contexts across the nation.

Furthermore, this chapter will review what the writer discovered about herself and how these discoveries were instrumental toward changing her. This chapter will furthermore direct parents and caregivers, community organizations, and neighborhood churches to become effective at developing the voice young children need to advocate for them as they improve their reading skills through the use of Bible stories.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

When the author reflects on her spiritual life she is reminded of Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew [and] approved of you [as My chosen instrument], and before you were born I separated and set you apart, consecrating you: [and] I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” She does not mean to add to the scripture, but rather to personalize it from the Amplified Bible to describe how God set a plan in motion for her life even before she was conceived.

The author did not develop a spiritual life until her late twenties. She was born the tenth of fourteen siblings and grew up on the west side of Chicago, which provided her, to say the least, a challenging life. Because of the years between her and her older siblings, she was referred to as one of the second-generation children. Her household was the traditional two-parent home. Her father worked as a truck driver for Coca Cola, and her mother was a stay at home mom; occasionally her mother worked for the Post Office during the holiday season. The researcher's family did not attend church, although her father confessed the Baptist faith and her mother the Catholic. On Sundays when Christians prepared to go to church and worship, the author and her second-generation siblings prepared to spend Sunday with their uncle and his wife who had no children of their own. There they engaged in a junk food feast.

The author's first recollection of going to church was when she was in the sixth grade. At that time she was enrolled in a Catholic school with five other siblings, and church attendance was mandatory for the children, although neither parent attended. After graduation from the eighth grade the author was enrolled in the public high school, and mandatory church attendance and weekly confessions were of the past. At that point she became the designated caretaker of her younger siblings, and her brother-in-law began to refer to her as "Momma Pearl." As she looks back she recognizes how a lack of spiritual guidance can lead to lawlessness. Life had no rules for her and her siblings. The dysfunction in her family household was severe, and eventually her parents divorced and went their separate ways, leaving seven siblings with a six-bedroom house--not as a gift, as they were abandoned with the house. At the age that a student can drop out of school if desired, the author was graduating from high school. There was no discussion about college. Instead she was informed to follow her father's strong work ethic and find a job, as she was pregnant and expecting her first child in a few months.

During her years at the Catholic school the researcher had gone to church four to five times a week. Once she graduated from that school she vowed never to go to church again, and she stayed faithful to that vow for a very long time. She did begin college, however; and, as she was a full-time college student and working full time, marriage and children began to take their toll on her mental health. Her break came on Sundays when the Baptist church bus came to take her children off her hands for a few hours. While she enjoyed that time to do nothing significant, God was working out His predestined plan for her life.



An outreach worker from the church came to her home once a week and had a private Bible study with her. For some odd reason, she enjoyed the teaching. Six months later she accepted the worker's invitation to attend church. There she had a supernatural experience that led her to the altar to accept Jesus as her Lord and Savior. After receiving a bachelor's degree in social work, she was admitted to the Master of Social Work program; however, she moved out of the state and did not take advantage of that opportunity.

The spiritual experience she had was imprinted on her heart, so she soon started to attend the Baptist church in her new city. She was baptized and was given an usher's position on Sundays. A great hunger for God was stirring in her. Within two years she left the Baptist church and began attending a Pentecostal church, which insisted she be baptized again; as a member, she followed their rules. Her hunger for God continued, and when possible she gathered her second-generation siblings to study the Bible with her. While she had no Bible training, she possessed an overwhelming passion to teach the little she knew. Her oldest sister was attending a different denomination with her in-laws, but she traveled sixty miles one way to come to the author's house and attend a Bible study that was facilitated by someone who had more knowledge than the author. The researcher's husband did not want any part of church life, and as her children grew older they too distanced themselves from the church. In hindsight, she sees that church attendance for them and for her was a tradition, although the hunger she felt to teach the Bible was real. Richard Peace, in his book *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story*, wrote, "Writing a spiritual autobiography usually brings great insight. We notice patterns in our lives that we had never seen before. We

understand better who we are and where God is leading us. We are clearer about our purpose on this planet.”<sup>1</sup> Reflecting on those statements the author's thoughts shifted to two areas in her life that greatly concerned her. One was her erratic employment history, and the other her concern for young children.

The author always had a strong work ethic. She took her first summer job at the age of fourteen, and throughout high school and college she obtained good jobs. They were professional jobs requiring a license and/or certifications, and they paid a great salary with health benefits; however, she never stayed at a job for more than a few years at a time. Writing her spiritual autobiography she was able to see that through her employment she gained experience that would be needed on her spiritual journey; and staying in a secular position for twenty to thirty years and then retiring was not going to get her to the place God was leading her spiritually.

Entrepreneurship, self-employment, or having her own business has been a desire of the author's heart for decades. In 1993 she resigned, in good standing, from her professional job and moved to another state to attend a Bible school before her enrollment was even approved. Unfortunately, she was informed that her admission was denied because she was married and the school required that both spouses attend. Terribly disappointed and unemployed, she discovered this disappointment was not a total loss; she was able to attend the free public education classes provided by the Bible school. While she attended these educational sessions, her youngest son was miraculously healed from asthma.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Peace, *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story* (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 1998), 49.

In 1994 the author's mother died unexpectedly. She gathered her family and moved back to Illinois to be close to her extended family, where life was opposite to what she expected; she and her siblings never discussed the death of their mother, and life was just as it had always been but without their mother to consult.

During the years 1995-2001, the researcher's employment history took her on an emotional rollercoaster. The desire to write Christian literature was so intense that it was her one and only focus. Again, she resigned from her professional employment. Her employer, feeling she was leaving her job to do something totally illogical, contacted her husband to inform him that she would be losing a good salary and her family's health benefits. However, there was no stopping her. She opened a non-profit community program and legally started a Christian home-based business. She used money from savings to pay for business courses; but even when it was evident her varied business and ministry were not working, she continued the cycle of working professional jobs to pay bills then resigning, always in good standing, to go on another business venture.

Although she was qualified in her profession and making a difference with the people she served, she was not fulfilled. This cycle kept her family in a low-income bracket and sometimes below poverty level, evidenced by her children's qualifying for the free lunch program.

The writer even worked several months through a temporary staffing service at a Christian publishing company as a book order filler. She enjoyed filling book orders and perusing through the books as she gathered the orders. She received more enjoyment out of that job at minimum wage than she had working her salaried positions. She soon went back to work at a regular job; however, in 1996 during her spare time she wrote a

Christian booklet titled *Only for a Season*. She did the necessary research to self-publish and pay the fee to get her booklet in the Library of Congress. She was elated to have completed the booklet. She had no idea what an editor was; and her sister, a school teacher, upon seeing the booklet and reading a few lines, snickered and asked, "Did you write like that on purpose?" At the time she did not give much attention to her sister's statement. She sold copies and got a few invitations to speak at women's events. The effect of a lack of confidence and no spiritual guidance was evident in her life. She completed two other booklets in 2001; however, she never sought to get them published in the Library of Congress. She started one children's book titled "Who's Minding the Children" but never completed it.

The researcher's first platform to teach young children came in 1989. She had given birth to her fourth son in 1988, and after eight weeks of maternity leave it was time for her to go back to work. Somehow her position, working as a certified alcohol and drug counselor with adult women in a parent/child facility, was filled during her maternity leave. She was given a position as childcare worker, working with the children of the adult women in the facility. She enjoyed the time she spent teaching them, providing care and protecting them while being their voice; after all, this profession she learned as a young child caring for her siblings. However, now she had a young baby at home who had gone through three childcare providers before the age of one. She resigned her job, again in good standing, and through legal channels opened her own home daycare, naming the business "Rainbow Learning Center" because God always keeps His promises; her son was safe and protected and she was his voice.

Her first platform to teach the Bible publicly to young children came in 2007, when a group of people from her church traveled from Kentucky to Long Island, New York, to help a former member facilitate a week-long Vacation Bible School. She taught children in third-fifth grades. The experience was sensational! She returned home, having excelled spiritually and educationally. She enrolled at Northern Kentucky University to get her second bachelor's degree, this time in the field of Journalism. She had always wanted to write, travel and do photography; and she assumed this would be a great opportunity to learn the trade. However, during this time she encountered a trail of tragedies. In 2007 a tumor the size of a cantaloupe caused her to lose massive amounts of blood; and after several months and evidence that this was life threatening, emergency major surgery was required. Despite this, in 2008 she was graduated with her bachelor's degree in Journalism. Her second-generation brother died that year, in 2009 her sister died, and in 2010 her oldest granddaughter was killed in a car crash at the age of fifteen.

In spite of all this tragedy the author continued in her faith. In November 2010, a new door for public Christian education teaching opened for her when she was given an opportunity to host her own Christian broadcast, via the Campbell County Media Central. The "outreach" broadcast was to reach out to the residents in Campbell County, Kentucky, and the Cincinnati, Ohio, area with the potential to reach more than 100,000 viewers. The show, titled "Taste and See Foundational Teaching Broadcast," was a one-hour weekly broadcast airing three times a week. Because she was doing foundational teaching she did not feel inadequate, but she was aware that God was continuing to work His plan in her life. She wrote out her weekly broadcast and then presented it on television. She was writing again!

The first broadcast aired in January 2011, and she launched an eight-week series on spiritual growth. Two of her sons did the video production. She would like to say she was confident in this venture, but once the cameras started to roll she froze. It took six hours to sum up her first lesson; however, with the help of her sons to cut and edit, and apply graphics and Christian music, her many flaws were minimized and her one-hour broadcast was a success. In May 2011 she was graduated from Northern Kentucky University with her master's degree. In all her years of education she never thought to apply to a Christian school, probably because she subconsciously remembered how she was rejected in the past. In June 2011 her oldest brother died, and she immediately rebuked death in her family. People have asked why she was not interested in hospice to comfort those who lose loved ones. Truth be told, she is interested in life, not death.

In July 2011 the researcher was given the opportunity to enroll in a Doctor of Ministry program, which would help her develop her outreach broadcasting project. Realizing she was working God's plan and not her own, she enrolled in seminary school to complete classes that would strengthen her Christian knowledge. It was revealed to her that her ministry focus would be working with children aged six to twelve. In June 2012 she facilitated a summer program for youth. In June 2013 she completed her doctoral model working with low-income children to improve grade level reading through the engagement of the Scriptures via her context, Corinthians Missionary Baptist Church; neighborhood children were invited to participate in this summer reading camp.

The author continued to broadcast weekly, but the focus soon shifted from adults to broadcasting lessons appropriate for spiritual growth in children. The church she partnered with asked her to help start a one-hour Sunday school for the neighborhood

children. Plans went forth to facilitate a second annual summer reading camp in 2014; the theme: Improving grade level reading through engagement of the Scriptures. This subject matter is not a new concept, but a model that has lost its community bond; this was a great opportunity to transform young, impressionable children into productive members of society.

As she reflects on her spiritual autobiography the author can see how God was moving in her life. As a teenager she wanted to travel, write and photograph. She sees now how that is taking shape in the form of ministry. In 2010-2011 she completed a four-book series on Spiritual Transformation. She worked at the airport, whereby she could take advantage of free flight benefits for three years; while traveling she took photos of everything she saw. With the evolving of technology her love for photography has expanded into film. In the latter part of 2010 she began work on her master's thesis by filming a documentary on *Spirituality: An Alternative to Combat Obesity in America*. She also started a Christian teaching broadcast in January 2011. She is now living a fulfilled and meaningful life, walking in her purpose and confident that God is working in her life. In her book *The One Year Devotion for Moms*, Ellen Banks Elwell wrote: "When we come to Christ and experience a spiritual birth, the Holy Spirit helps us to see God's Word with new eyes. It's as though the words of Scripture jump straight from the page into our hearts, and we begin to understand God's purposes in ways we never did before."<sup>2</sup>

As she proceeds forward in her divine call the author is reminded that it is not her but Christ in her, the hope of glory that enables and empowers her to do all things

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<sup>2</sup>Ellen Banks Elwell, *The One Year Devotion for Moms* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005), March 21 Devotion page..

through Christ who strengthens her. She is committed to take the time to help the young children she serves and mentor them not only to read at and above grade level but also to grow spiritually in the knowledge of Christ.

### **Context Analysis**

The context for this ministry model is Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church (CMBC), located in Newport, Kentucky, a community that is approximately three miles from downtown Cincinnati, Ohio, and was established in 1866. The church does not possess much of its physical history; according to the church secretary, Sandy Griffin, all of the church's past records that would present an accurate history were destroyed in the flood of 1937.

The Flood of 1937 became the worst in Northern Kentucky's history with the Ohio River reaching a peak elevation of 79.9 feet on January 26, 1937. Over 2500 Newport homes were flooded, many filled to the rooftops. In sharp contrast, the river's record low is recorded at 1 foot 7 inches, descending to this level during the drought of 1881.<sup>3</sup>

Griffin was able to provide a brief verbal account from what she was told by elder members in the church, and she also provided a two-page text describing her account of the church's history. According to the text from Griffin, CMBC was established in 1866 when a small group of individuals were inspired by the Holy Spirit to organize a church. Names of the individuals were not accounted for, and records of such individuals were destroyed in the flood. The church held their first meeting at the Newport Court House in May of 1866. In November of 1882 the church purchased a church building from the

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<sup>3</sup>Judy L. Neff and Peggy Harris, *Wiedemann* (Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; Portsmouth, NH; San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publishing, 2004),



Presbyterians at 520 Columbia Street in Newport; prior to this church location the congregation met at various places.

It was three years before the congregants actually moved into the facility. On the first Sunday in June of 1885, the Rev. J. Clark led his congregation into the church. There was no baptism pool in the church, so baptisms were held at other churches or in the Ohio River. The date is unaccounted for, but the Rev. C.P.M. Bigbee baptized eighty-eight people at the foot of the river of Columbia Street in one day.

CMBC has had more than twenty-five pastors. The Sunday School department is a vital part to all that the church stands for. The current overseers include Pastor W. L. Taylor and Deacon James Watkins, who serves as Superintendent. The present trustees are Chairman Brother Ronald Hambrick, Brother Robert Ingguls, Financial Secretary Sister Jean Gunnels, Treasurer Brother Larry Miles, and Brother Alfred Crawford. The present church secretary is Sister Jonda Griffin. The present Sunday School teachers are Sister Venita Taylor and Brother Calvin Lane.

The current church is located at 137 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Newport, Kentucky. During the time of this writing, the church has fifty members that show up regularly. CMBC is a predominantly black church. Other ethnic groups have joined for worship, but they have not become members. According to city.data.com, detailed statistics show that blacks are 5.7% of the population in Newport: whites are 88.6% and Hispanics are 2.4%. The median household income in 2011 was \$39,214, and the median gross rent in 2011 was \$567.<sup>4</sup> According to Newport's city webpage there are twenty-seven churches in

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.city-data.com/city/Newport-Kentucky.html> (accessed April 4, 2015).

Newport, and their history dates back to 1812.<sup>5</sup> As the church members at CMBC are getting older, no successors are available to replace members as they transition out of their positions. The church has struggled for years to engage young children in their Sunday School program; currently no children attend, although the Sunday School department is a vital part to all the church stands for. The church provides no program for teens, and currently CMBC has nothing to encourage young people to return. Little is known to this writer about the context.

### **Synergy**

When this writer first attended a Wednesday night Bible study at CMBC she knew it was a divine appointment. The church had a vision to invite children in for Sunday School, but they did not have a strategy to execute that vision. The author felt the church would be the perfect place for her to work to canvas the neighborhood and schools to invite children reading below grade level to attend a summer reading program to improve their reading. The church is located in a low-income neighborhood, identified by the number of students who receive reduced or free school lunch.

In 2013 the author's eight-year-old, third-grade granddaughter shared in a general conversation that she was not going to graduate from high school. She could not articulate the inner frustration she was feeling with school and not possessing the knowledge to keep up academically with her classmates. She was not the only one who was not reading on grade level. According to a newspaper article in the Campbell County

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<sup>5</sup><http://www.newportky.org> (accessed April 4, 2015).

Community Recorder, in 2012 approximately 2500 third graders in Northern Kentucky and the Greater Cincinnati area were not reading at grade level by the end of third grade.<sup>6</sup>

After doing extensive research on the subject of proficiency and the consequences befalling children who are not proficient at reading, the author had a decision to make. She knew she could not quit her job because she had financial obligations; however, her entrepreneurial spirit started to wake up. She knew she had only a window of three months to initiate her doctoral project, which she had to tweak in order to address the issue of improving grade level reading. Contacting the Covington, Kentucky, Rekindle program for small businesses, she went through an accelerated program to start a small business and developed a budget, which would include a salary for herself and two part-time qualified employees. The Newport School District approved the project model, and the author reached out to several teachers at the intermediate school to acquire information and a possible list of students who were in need of improving their reading skills to enroll in the project.

After completing a food training session, Highland Ave. Methodist Church agreed to provide lunch and an afternoon snack at no cost to the researcher or the students because the students to be served lived in a low-income neighborhood that met the guidelines for free or reduced lunch. The author partnered with a church that had a desire to operate a Sunday School but had not been successful in their effort to keep children enrolled. The church offered space at a cost that was out of the author's budget; however, she believed the financial support from the community and additional fundraising would make up the difference.

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.kyforward.com/our-northern-kentucky/2012/11/northern-kentucky-leaders-come-together-to-support-education-early-childhood-literacy> accessed February 17, 2015).

With a plan of action in place, the researcher resigned from her professional employment, again in good standing, and developed her doctoral project model, a summer reading project to assist students who were not reading at their grade level. This reading improvement would be implemented through the engagement of the Scriptures. As she shared her project with her cohort group and mentors, they were able to help her articulate her passion and the correlation to engage the students through the Scriptures to improve their grade level reading. It was the Holy Spirit who revealed to her that this project was not a coincidence, but this engagement with children and the Scriptures would be her calling.

In the midst of developing a project model for her doctoral program to increase spiritual growth among young people, the writer was convicted by her granddaughter's silent cry for help to improve her ability to read. She reflected back to her spiritual autobiography and remembered how as a child she also did not read on grade level. She did not enter into kindergarten "kindergarten ready" as most schools would like a student to be. Her first remembrance was the fact that she could not even spell her name. She knew how to write letters, but when her class had to write their names on paper she copied what the little girl next to her was writing, and wrote the girl's first and last names on her own paper. She eventually learned to spell her name and read basic words as the years progressed; however, she never did read at grade level. At the same time her third-grade granddaughter was struggling with her inability to read, her kindergarten grandson was encountering his own personal struggle with school. He was not as timid as her granddaughter; and when the author asked him how he was doing in school, he stated loudly and clearly, "I hate school!" The author laughed, thinking he was just going

through a phase because he was in kindergarten and had to adhere to the structure. As she reread her own spiritual autobiography, she experienced embarrassment at her ignorance of not understanding what her grandson was undergoing. She was then able to empathize with the many parents who cannot recognize the problem in their children.

Concerned for her grandchildren and the low-income children across the nation not reading at grade level, the author felt she needed to focus her doctoral project on that academic problem, which can be viewed as a “National Tragedy.” The writer set out to develop a model to help low-income children improve their grade level reading through the engagement of the Scriptures. This way she could also incorporate some principles for spiritual growth.

According to the article *A Tribute to Rudolf Flesch*, “Kids in the first grade already know more than 20,000 words. They need help ASAP in recognizing the printed version of all the words.” The author of the article followed up with an example:

Suppose the story is about a farm; there are chickens, mules, ducks, cows, pigs, turkeys, horses and a rooster there. The child knows all those words; with just a hint of the starting sound, the child reads all those words. Call phonics one of the great inventions of the human history. Or call it a code-breaker, a crutch, a trick, a cheat sheet. It lets children read all those thousands of fairly complex words they speak in conversation by age five, but with look-say will not be able to read until they are in high school, if ever. Words such as hurricane, internet, digital, vacation, interstate, Mercedes, crocodile, computing, cheerleader, quarterback, aspirin, battery, janitor, detergent, headquarters, electricity, military, Manhattan, athletic, chemistry, understand, groceries, religion, Hollywood, etc., etc.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.improve-education.org/id29.html> accessed April 4, 2015

Flesch painted a clear picture that all children should and can read, and they can read at grade level. It is clear that due to controversy regarding methods and approaches used, children will need added help from family or others who invest in school-aged children's education.

The researcher could have chosen several schools in Northern Kentucky; however, the Newport, Kentucky, school has only one primary school, grades k-2, and one intermediate school, grades 3-5. This was good for her context as both schools are in the same city. She made contact with the principal of both to acquire information about putting up posters and having parents sign consent forms to obtain data regarding the children who could benefit from a summer reading program and information about the children's current reading scores. It appeared to be a win-win situation for all involved.

Students not reading at grade level by the end of third grade is a problem linked to other social issues, such as poverty, high school dropout rates, unemployment, criminal activity and incarceration, just to note a few. Even though the writer realizes numerous models are available to improve children's reading skills, the use of Bible stories can also be helpful.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

Examining the state of the art in this ministry model led to research of more recent material on teaching and consideration of how this material did or did not focus on improving grade level reading among low-income children through the engagement of the Scriptures. The state of the art in this ministry model includes points of agreement and disagreement of reading models used to acquire the outcome of improving reading skills.

According to education editor Graeme Paton:

The Bible should be used to teach pupils about creative writing because it acts as the ideal template for storytelling, according to academics. The Old and New Testament should be employed to encourage children to learn about characteristics, themes and structuring a narrative, it was claimed.<sup>1</sup>

He also stated, “Researchers from Exeter University said 11-to14-year olds should be encouraged to learn about such stories as the creation, Noah and the flood, David and Goliath, the nativity, Jesus turning water into wine and the crucifixion—then reinterpret them using a series of literary techniques.”<sup>2</sup>

In his book *Reaching and Teaching Through Vacation Bible School*, Arthur D. Burcham quoted Dr. Homer L. Grice. According to Burcham, Grice is of the opinion that

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<sup>1</sup>[www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page/71/?s&paged=67](http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page/71/?s&paged=67)access (accessed March 16, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

Vacation Bible School or the reading of Scriptures can assist children toward improving their reading skills. Burcham stated that Grice said:

Vacation Bible School is an extension of the public schools into the summer vacation time with the Bible as the content. This concept may have been behind his development of a joint service that included three elements coming to public school opening exercises; the pledge to the United States flag, bible reading, and prayer.<sup>1</sup>

D. Campbell Wyckoff noted that Robert Raikes invented the institution of Sunday School in England. In his book, *Renewing The Sunday School and the CCD*, Wyckoff stated that “Raikes sought the Sunday school as a means to provide education for poor and factory working children, he hoped by such education to provide a vehicle by which crime could be reduced.”<sup>2</sup> In addition Wyckoff noted:

The Sunday school was initiated as an agency of social betterment that would reform society, it was with the same vision that Sunday school spread to the new Nation of the United States. Sunday school began in several of the cities as vehicles for education particularly in reading and writing to provide better life chances for the poor.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Wyckoff stated, “The teaching of reading using the Bible as text was for them a means of influencing and “moralizing” the character of the poor and thereby “improving the social fabric.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur D. Burcham, *Reaching and Teaching Through Vacation Bible School* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1984), 12.

<sup>2</sup>D. Campbell Wyckoff, *Renewing The Sunday School and the CCD* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, Inc., 1986), 7.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 7-8.



Wyckoff continued to examine and explore the use of Scriptures to improve grade level reading or education as a whole when he stated in this book the opinion of Mary Love. According to Wyckoff, Love stated:

Sunday schools have been and continue to be of vital importance to the life of blacks in America by providing the means for nurturing persons who have encountered uprootedness and oppression. Within these Sunday schools blacks have learned to read, write, theologize, be creative and develop their God given talents.<sup>5</sup>

In the book *Values For Tomorrow's Children: An Alternative Future for Education in the Church*, John H. Westerhoff III revisited the history of the use of religious institutions toward secular education. He stated:

An accurate evaluation of its importance for religious education may be beyond us, but we do owe these lay Sunday schools a debt of gratitude. For many children these were the only school they knew. Only the privileged had the opportunity to attend those schools which later in the colonies were to become "public" or "common" schools.<sup>6</sup>

Westerhoff wrote, "Sunday school became the forerunner of public school and church in America."<sup>7</sup>

Donald M. Joy, in *Childhood Education in the Church*, wrote: "In the early centuries of the church, no provision was made for the education of children, either in basic literacy or in Christian faith. "<sup>8</sup> The book continues to say:

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<sup>5</sup>D. Wyckoff, 170.

<sup>6</sup>John H. Westerhoff III, *Values For Tomorrow's Children: An Alternative Future for Education in the Church* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1973),17.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>8</sup>Robert E. Clark, Joanne Brubaker, and Roy B. Zuck, *Childhood Education in the Church* (Chicago, Il: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1986), 9.

Not until the decades following the Reformation did Christian concern focus upon basic literacy education for children in general or upon usefulness of bible study in the education of the young. When the Sunday school movement leaped to America, it became less and less literacy program and increasingly a gospel agency.”<sup>9</sup>

In *Christianity, Society and Education* by John Ferguson, Professor Alfred

Wallace said:

I do not rate the Sunday School highly. In my opinion they were merely a temporary panacea against ignorance and overwork in the early days of the factory system . . . I consider that if Sunday School teachers took their pupils into the field or garden and showed them some of the beauty and interest and mystery of nature, more good would be done than by all the Sunday Schools I have ever heard.<sup>10</sup>

In *Marva Collins' Way* Ms. Collins wrote, “I learned to read before I was old enough to go to school. My grandmother used to read aloud to me from her Bible, sounding out words by syllables. Once I discovered how to sound out words, I tried reading everything I could get my hands on.” Ms. Collins went on to write, “My introduction to literature began with the Bible stories I heard from my grandmother.” She stated, “I got so tired of hearing those proverbs when I was a child. Now I use them all the time. Sometimes they are the best way of saying what needs to be said. I teach them to my students.”<sup>11</sup> Collins left the public school after teaching for fourteen years. She started her own school on the west side of Chicago, called “Marva Collins Westside Preparatory School.” The Catholic school admissions director, Harvey Gross, who administered the California Achievement Test to students in more than seventy Chicago

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<sup>9</sup>Clark, et al., 10-11.

<sup>10</sup>John Ferguson, *Christianity Society and Education* (London NW4DU: The Camelot Press Ltd, Southampton, 1981), 126.

<sup>11</sup>Marva Collins and Civia Tamarkin, *Marva Collins' Way* (Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1982), 40.

area schools, noted that Marva's Westside prep students scored higher and showed greater progress than any other group he tested. Yet he was quick to acknowledge that test scores alone didn't tell the whole story. One had to watch Marva's students in the classroom to see the full effect of her energy and her conviction that children can learn.<sup>12</sup>

Teachers, professionals and community organizations utilize many teaching methods and approaches to help children read. The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools Program seeks to build strong, literate students and empower children prepared to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, the nation, and the world today. Since 1995, more than 125,000 pre-k to 12-year-olds have had a CDF Freedom School experience and more than 15,000 college students and recent graduates have been trained by CDF to deliver this empowering model. The CDF provides summer and after-school reading enrichment for children who might otherwise not have access to books. The CDF Freedom Schools program plays a much needed role in helping curb summer learning loss and close achievement gaps, and is a key part of CDF's work to ensure a level playing field for all children. In partnership with local congregations, schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, and secure juvenile justice facilities, the CDF Freedom Schools program boosts student motivation to read, generates more positive attitude toward learning, increases self-esteem, and connects the needs of children and families to the resources of their communities. The CDF Freedom Schools model incorporates the totality of the Children's Defense Fund's mission by fostering environments that support children and young adults to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference. Site coordinators and project directors are also trained

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

by CDF to provide supervision and administrative oversight. The program provides an exciting integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC) including carefully chosen developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant books. The model curriculum supports children and families around five essential components, which will be discussed later.<sup>13</sup>

Phyllis Schantz and Joseph Zimmer wrote an article in *History of Reading News* called “Why Johnny Can’t Read: 50 years of Controversy.” In it they wrote: “To understand the impact and importance of why Johnny Can’t Read, one must view it with the context of reading education history.” There were some who opposed what Flesch had to say about children not reading.”<sup>14</sup> In June, 1955, Florence Beaumont and Adele Franklin of the New York City Public Schools argued that “Flesch had blown the reading problem in schools out of proportion, and that schools were doing an excellent job teaching children to read (Beaumont & Franklin, 1955).”<sup>15</sup> Jhan and June Robbins argued in the September 1955 issue of *Reader’s Digest*: “Without a doubt, the most progress is being made in those schools where the teachers are combining the best of both methods—and remain open-minded about further improvement.”<sup>16</sup> One response to Flesch’s regarding the phonics approach was:

One of the writers contends that . . . all the teacher need to do is teach the child what each letter stands for (p. 197). Artley (1955) described this as the philosophy of the “old oaken bucket,” explaining that “the point of view most widely accepted by reputable reading people today. – Gates, Gray, Witty, Durrell, Betts, and others – is that phonics is merely one of several methods that the child may

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<sup>13</sup>cdinfo@childrendefense.org April 4, 2015.

<sup>14</sup><http://www.historyliteracy.org/newsletters/hitlist.2005.28.2.pdf> (accessed April 4, 2015).

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

use to unlock words” (p. 197), and he contentiously added, “I will defend to the last the point that unless children see early that reading is an avenue to new and exciting experiences they are not going to turn to it in their free time” (p. 199). More cautiously, Nila Banton Smith (1955), at New York University, reviewed the research on phonics and stated the consensus position of reading specialists: not all children need phonics instruction, but some children are helped when phonics is taught functionally.<sup>17</sup>

While the controversy continues, sixty years later (2015) an astronomically high number of low-income, school-aged children across the nation are still unable to read.

The article “‘Whole-Language’ Approach to Reading Emerges: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century ” reports:

Teaching children to learn how to read by sounding out letters was hardly a new concept, when Hooked on Phonics was created in the 1980s. In fact, it was the predominant way reading was taught at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “By the 1930s according to Success magazine, “progressive professors of education from Harvard and Columbia declared that phonics, with its rote memorization of sounds and symbols, was drudgery. They denounced the practice of sounding out words and said children could learn to read as naturally as they learned to talk—if they were allowed to peruse simple words in context. This ‘whole language’ philosophy was the basis of the ‘Dick and Jane’ readers.” The approach was controversial and was attacked in the 1950s by the book *Why Johnny Can’t Read*, yet it was staunchly defended by mainstream educators who, spearheaded by the International Reading Association (IRA), also spent a great deal of energy over the course of several decades to discredit phonics and implement whole-language reading programs. However as whole-language gained prominence there was no appreciable gain in literacy. Rather, literacy levels began to steadily slip following World War II, and many children who did learn to read struggle in their efforts, much to the concern of their parents.<sup>18</sup>

In the book *Dumbing Down Our Kids*, the author stated that Rudolf Flesch said something like this would happen.

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup><http://www.answers.com/topic/hop-llc> (accessed March 16, 2015).

In the mid-1950's, Flesch warned in the best-selling book *Why Johnny Can't Read* that American schools would produce a generation of illiterates if they continued to rely on faddish techniques for teaching reading. At the time Flesch wrote, American education was dominated by the "look-say" method of teaching. Instead of teaching children how to sound out words, the so-called phonetic method that had been used for generations, students were encouraged to look at and recognize the whole word. Flesch warned that the abandonment of phonics and other traditional approaches to reading was a "time bomb" primed to wreak educational havoc on the nation's schools. Although his book drew widespread attention, he was generally either ignored or vilified by educationists. But nearly four decades of experience have vindicated his Cassandra-like warnings. While national test scores of reading and writing abilities are awful enough, the experience of California may be the most obvious test case of Flesch's theory.<sup>19</sup>

In *The One Year Devotions for MOMS*, Ellen Banks Elwell wrote: "When my children were in preschool and early elementary years, one of my favorite things to do was to read to them. Whether we were sitting in a rocking chair or propped up in bed, it was fun to read and snuggle at the same time."<sup>20</sup> Elwell used a variety of approaches when reading with her children. "Although we learned from many kinds of books, God's Word enriched us more than any other. Together, we witnessed God's wonders and provisions in other people's lives, and we were encouraged to believe he would provide for us too."<sup>21</sup>

Improving grade level reading, regardless of the reading model used, will require children's participation. Judy Willis, MD, MEd, in her book *How Your Child Learns*

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<sup>19</sup>Skyles, Charles J. *Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why America's Children Feel Good About Themselves But Can't Read Write or Add* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995. 101.

<sup>20</sup>Elwell, January 1. Devotion page.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

*Best*, wrote, “Reading Comprehension is necessary not only for your child’s ability to enjoy literature, but also for him to be successful in the classroom.”<sup>22</sup> Willis continued:

When you inspire him through motivating literature and learning activities, he enjoys knowing that you are showing him the big picture of why reading is a worthy basket at which to aim. He will be motivated to build his reading skills by using enjoyable, learner-strength-compatible strategies to understand challenging words and recognize relationships between words. Interest and curiosity will stimulate him to build his neuronal circuits and gain ownership of new words, and from there increase his comprehension of what he reads.<sup>23</sup>

Willis suggested: “Before your child reads a story or chapter, help him activate any existing memory circuits that relate to what he is about to read.”<sup>24</sup> Memories are formed when the brain matches new information to existing related memory. Prior knowledge already stored in memory patterns provides a place to which new input can link.<sup>25</sup>

Daniel Willingham, in *Why Don’t Students Like School? A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How The Mind Works And What It Means For The Classroom*, wrote:

Contrary to popular belief, the brain is not designed for thinking. It’s designed to save you from having to think, because the brain is actually not very good at thinking. Thinking is slow and unreliable. Nevertheless, people enjoy mental work if it is successful. People like to solve problems, but not to work on unsolved problems. If schoolwork is always just a bit too difficult for a student, it should be no surprise that she doesn’t like school much.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Judy Willis, MD, MEd, *How Your Child Learns Best: Brain-Friendly Strategies You Can Use to Ignite Your Child’s Learning and Increase School Success* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2008), 79.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>26</sup>Daniel T. Willingham, *Why Don’t Students Like School* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 3.

Willingham's book includes chapters such as "How Can I Teach Students the Skills They Need When Standardize Tests Requires Only Facts?" "Why Do Students Remember Everything That's on Television and Forget Everything I Say?" "Why Is It So Hard for Students to Understand Abstract Ideas?" and "How Can I Help Slow Learners?"

The article "'Whole Language' Approach to Reading Emerges: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century" stated that

literacy levels began to steadily slip following World War II, and many children who did learn to read struggled in their efforts, much to the concern of their parents. One parent frustrated by his son's difficulty in learning to read was John M. Shanahan. He grew up in Boston. He turned his attention to the problem of emerging reading when his son, Sean, became so anxious about learning to read that he begged not to go to school. Shanahan tried to sound words with his son, the way the nuns had taught him, but Sean had no idea what he was talking about. Deciding to take matters into his own hands, Shanahan took his grade school lesson plans and spiced them up by writing catchy jingles to accompany the drills. He created a study tape for Sean to use and in a short order the boy learned to read and caught up with his classmates.<sup>27</sup>

In his book *Teach Like Your Hair's On Fire: The Method and Madness Inside Room 56*, Rafe Esquith directs the problem of children's not reading on grade level to other forces. He wrote:

It's complicated. There is a lot of finger-pointing. But to borrow a phrase from another big, fat book that won a Pulitzer Prize, our children are victims of a sort of "confederacy of dunces." Power forces of mediocrity have combined to prevent perfectly competent children from learning to love reading. These forces include television, video games, poor teaching, poverty, the breakup of the family, and a general lack of adult guidance.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup><http://www.answers.com/topic/hop-llc> (accessed March 20, 2015).

<sup>28</sup>Rafe Esquith, *Teach Like Your Hair's On Fire: The Method and Madness Inside Room 56* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), 30.



“You see, the children at our school do not read well. They do not like to read. As of this writing, 78 percent of the Latino children on our campus are not proficient in reading, according to our state’s standardized tests.”<sup>29</sup> Esquith proceeded to discuss how scripted based reading used by the Los Angeles Unified School District to teach children to read is not effective. “I have never seen district reading objectives in which the words joy, passion, or excitement top the list.”<sup>30</sup> Esquith went on to state, “Last year all of my students who came to me with a rating of far below basic passed their basic reading proficiency tests at the end of the year.”<sup>31</sup>

In the article “The Method of Repeated Reading,” S. J. Samuels shared a technique to improve reading by repeatedly reading short stories. He wrote:

For example, in one of our earlier studies children who had been experiencing great difficulty in learning to read were instructed to select easy stories which were of interest to them. Then depending on the reading skill of the student, short selections (50-200 words) from these stories were marked off for practice. While we were researching this method at the University of Minnesota, unknown to us Carol Chomsky at Harvard University was using similar techniques with poor readers and was getting similar good results.<sup>32</sup>

Chomsky stated, “Successive stories required fewer listenings to reach fluency. . . . The work provided in addition a heightened sense of confidence and motivation. Within several months the children become far more willing and able to undertake reading new material on their own.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>32</sup>S. Jay Samuels, “The Method of Repeated Reading,” *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 50. No. 5 (Feb. 1997), pp. 376-381.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 377.

In *Teach Me To Do It Myself: Montessori Activities for You and Your Child*, author Maja Pitamic stated, “Children approach language in a different way than adults. If your child is enjoying an activity, he will ‘absorb’ the language being introduced; it will not seem like hard work.” Pitamic wrote that reading follows naturally when a child develops a love for books and language.<sup>34</sup> Pitamic went on to write, “Through your storytelling, you have enabled your child to experience the potential excitement of language. Now you can help her to explore the vocal power of words through their sounds, rhythms, and rhymes.”<sup>35</sup> How a story is read affects how a child follows and understands it. It is recommended that during the story the parent or teacher ask questions and make comments, being careful that the questions and comments do not get in the way of the sequence of the story.<sup>36</sup>

Zondervan Books noted:

Every child learns to read in a different way and at his or her own speed. You can help your young reader improve and become more confident by encouraging his or her own interests and abilities. You can also guide your child’s spiritual development by reading stories with biblical values and Bible stories, like I Can Read! Books published by Zonderkidz. From books your child reads with you to the first books he or she reads alone, there are I Can Read! Books for every stage of reading:

1. My First is shared reading. Basic language, word repetition, and whimsical illustrations, ideals for sharing with your emergent reader.
2. Beginning Reading. Short sentences, familiar words, and simple concepts for children eager to read on their own.

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<sup>34</sup>Maja Pitamic, *Teach Me To Do It Myself: Montessori Activities for You and Your Child*, (Hauppauge, NY: Elwin Street Limited, 2004), 79.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 81.

3. Reading With Help. Engaging stories, longer sentences, and language play for developing readers.
4. Reading Alone. Complex plots, challenging vocabulary, and high-interest topics for the independent reader.
5. Advanced Reading. Short paragraphs, chapters, and exciting themes for the perfect bridge to chapter book.<sup>37</sup>

Not everyone learns to read from a model reader. “John J. Jasper (1812-93) was a slave during his youth. A fellow slave taught him to read. He started reading out of the *New York Spelling Book* until he was able to read the Bible. Within months he was converted and soon after that he was called to preach.”<sup>38</sup> There are also ways to compensate for not knowing how to read. In his book, *Black Theology Today: Liberation and Contextualization*, Roberts wrote:

Many people don’t know how to read, and the Bible is a book! Sometimes no one in the group knows how to read. They are inventing ways to get around this problem. They are using song and story, pictures and little plays. They are thus making up their own version of the “Bible of the poor.” Thanks to songs, for example, many people who have never read the Bible know almost every story in it.<sup>39</sup>

The writer's search for state of the art material led her to a website referring to curriculum where the Bible is currently being used to increase students' speaking, reading and writing skills. The article she read referred to a Bible-based curriculum called *Bible-based Literacy*. The article stated:

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<sup>37</sup>*I Can Read Reading 2 Miracles of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz Publishing, 2014).

<sup>38</sup>Roberts, James Deotis, *Black Theology Today: Liberation and Contextualization*, (New York, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983.86.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

*Bible-based Literacy* ministry effectively teaches reading and writing skills while providing an introduction to the word of God. Helping the illiterate learn basic reading and writing skills is a proven and effective form of evangelistic outreach. Literacy teachers engage students in Bible reading while raising education levels and living standards. Without the ability to effectively use the written and digital information around them, these individuals face a life of struggle and poverty.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, Rachel Wojo, in her book *Teaching Young Children to Read through Bible Stories*, gave five tips on teaching young children to read through Bible stories.

Wojo stated, “Reading empowers children.”<sup>41</sup> The five tips she uses for teaching young children to read through Bible stories are:

1. Have your child point out any sight or high frequency words they know before you begin. While they may not know every word in the Bible story you are reading, the words they do know will help them relate to the story.
2. While reading the story, point to each word as you say it. Doing this will reinforce the idea that every word you say has a visual to accompany it. When you arrive at a word your child knows, pause and give them the opportunity to read the word.
3. Choose one new word from the Bible story for your child to learn and sign. One way to choose this word is to read the story first and have your child to listen for a word they like. You can make up a motion or sign to go with it. The ASL sign for Jesus takes the tip of your middle finger of one hand and touches the open palm of the other. Then switch hands. Visually, this shows the nails in Jesus’ hands, a great way for your child to remember this word easily!
4. Choose a new word and add motion to reinforce action. Maybe the word is one that holds action or special meaning and you visually perform the action of the word as you say it. For example. “Be still and know that I am God” could focus on being still. A standard game of freeze tag or play

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<sup>40</sup>Literacy-outreach, <http://www.bibleleague.org/what-we-do/how-we-serve/literacyreview> (accessed March 5, 2015).

<sup>41</sup>Rachel Wojo, <http://rachelwojo.com> (accessed March 17, 2015).

could be transformed to reflect purposefully being still to learn more about God.

5. Help your child listen for the letter sound of a current letter they are learning. At the end of a line of reading, pause and ask your child if they heard the /s/ sound in any of the words you just read. Or before reading the line, say “Listen for the /s/ sound in this sentence. ” At the end of the line, ask your child to point to the word that holds the /s/ sound.<sup>42</sup>

Children at all income levels should be afforded the opportunity to enhance their reading skills. This model is an attempt to reestablish and reaffirm the use of biblical stories to enhance reading abilities. Appropriately used, this model can greatly aid parents in the convenience of their homes or in other private settings. Unfortunately, very few Bible based models are in use today that teach reading and writing skills through Bible stories. Today, in most inner city churches there are reading programs, and hopefully this model will soon be available to churches everywhere.

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<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The context is Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church in Newport, Kentucky. The Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's Mayors for Education Government Forum came together to discuss the importance of early childhood literacy. Children within the community of Newport are not only low income but struggle to maintain proficient reading skills. This project is designed to produce a model that will improve their grade level reading through the use of the Scriptures. This document will reflect how reading the Scriptures will improve grade level reading among all low-income children.

It is the responsibility of our society to ensure that children have the chance to become successful. In order for this to happen it is imperative that children must first learn to read. The end of third grade marks the point when they transition from learning to read to reading to learn other subjects. Children who read proficiently by the end of third grade are more likely to graduate high school and to be economically successful in adulthood. In fact, national research reveals that approximately one in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.<sup>1</sup> The following report provides an update on how fourth graders are faring in reading across the nation and in each state.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.kyforward.com/our-northern-kentucky/2012/11/northern-kentucky-leaders-come-together-to-support-education-early-childhood-literacy> accessed February 17, 2015).

According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, 80 percent of low income fourth graders and 66 percent of all fourth graders are not proficient in reading. Although improvement has been made in the past decade reading proficiency remains unacceptably low in an economic environment that requires increasing levels of education and skills for family-sustaining jobs by 2020, the United States is expected to face a shortage of 1.5 million workers with college degrees but will have a surplus of 6 million individuals without a high school diploma who are unemployed because they lack necessary educational credentials. If we do not make sure all children gain the needed reading skills to be successful in school, their future educational and economic prospects will be dim, and our economy will lag.<sup>1</sup>

Children not reading at grade level and who do not graduate high school are pushed out of the classroom (zero tolerance) and eventually pushed into prison. According to the article "The School to Prison Pipeline," policies and practices are in force that favor incarceration over education of certain groups of people.<sup>2</sup>

This project emphasizes the importance and urgency of literacy among younger children, and the consequences of their not reading at grade level by the end of third grade. It also presents the use of Scriptures as another tool to improve and increase grade level reading among low income children. Many Bible verses can be used to address the care of children. One in particular is Ezekiel 16:20-21, where Ezekiel presents a strong and amplified message to the people; he boldly confronts them for their neglect of the children that they sacrificed and slaughtered. Children should be of utmost concern to any society, and their education is vital if they are to thrive.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.aecf.org> (accessed February 16, 2015).

<sup>2</sup><http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-43-spring-2013/school-to-prison> (accessed February 16, 2015).

This section will examine the biblical, historical, and theological aspects of this project and provide a summary of its theoretical foundation. The need to enhance and improve the reading skills of children living in poverty/low income conditions cannot be overstated. Professional education should be afforded to all children regardless of their socio-economic conditions.

It must be stated that the importance of education must begin in the homes where parents focus on the need of a good education. According to an article written in Take Part.Com, “The importance of the role parents play in supporting their children’s education is not debatable. If parents help their children at home, work with schools to support learning, and advocate for their child’s needs, the chances are that children will do better.”<sup>3</sup> However, in many instances this does not happen. In the Michigan Education Report, Lori Yaklin stated:

Few deny that there is an education crisis in this country. But even fewer seem to agree on the causes of, and solution to, the crisis. Many suggest that the way to boost academic achievement is to give more money to schools. But the fact that national SAT scores have declined 73 points since 1960 while education spending has increased 200 percent (in real dollars) suggests that the education crisis is not so much a question of lack of spending, but lack of spending priorities. Could it be that we as a society have simply overburdened the public school system with demands that detract from the legitimate mission of academic achievement?<sup>4</sup>

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) suggests in their ethical responsibilities to children:

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children’s development and learning; respecting individual differences; and

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.takepart.com/article/2012/10/22/parents-role-supporting-their-childs-education-is-not-debatable> (accessed March 19, 2015).

<sup>4</sup><http://www.educationreport.org/3224> (accessed March 19, 2015).



helping children learn to live, play, and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being.<sup>5</sup>

So education must be supported not only by the parents, the school, and other educational driven organizations, but by society as a whole. The use of biblical stories to improve the reading skills of children is nothing new. In 1780 Robert Raikes hired four women to teach children on Sundays. They were instructed to teach the children reading and catechism. The biblical foundation chosen, Ezekiel 16:20-21, supports making an amplified statement to the people that there is an urgent matter that must be addressed regarding our school-aged children who are not reading at grade level. In this text God once again used the prophet Ezekiel to address Israel, His people.

### **Biblical Foundation**

You took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. As if your whoring were not enough! You slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering to them.<sup>6</sup>

The book of Ezekiel takes its title from the priest of the same name, son to a man named Buzi. Ezekiel was of the priestly lineage, which shines through in his prophetic ministry. He often concerned himself with topics such as the temple, the priesthood, the glory of the Lord, and the sacrificial system. Charles Swindoll's studies report that:

Ezekiel 1:1 tells us that the prophecy began "in the thirtieth year." Scholars usually consider this a reference to Ezekiel's age, making him about the same age as Daniel, who was exiled to Babylon nearly a decade earlier. Like many priests of Israel, Ezekiel was married. But when his wife died during his prophetic

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<sup>5</sup><http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05.pdf>. (accessed February 10, 2015).

<sup>6</sup>Ezekiel 16:20-21 ESRV.

ministry, God prevented Ezekiel from mourning her in public as a sign of Judah's lack of concern for the things of God (Ezekiel 24:16–24).<sup>7</sup>

Ezekiel lived among the Jewish exiles in Babylon at a settlement along the river Chebar called Tel-abib (Ezekiel 3:15), less than one hundred miles south of Babylon. The invading Babylonians brought about ten thousand Jews to the village in 597 BC, including Ezekiel and the last king of Judah, Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:8–14). Ezekiel's prophecy began a mere five years into his time at Tel-abib (Ezekiel 1:2), and he continued to prophesy among the people for at least twenty-two years (29:17). Because he spoke to a people whom God had exiled due to their continued rebellion against Him, a majority of Ezekiel's message communicates judgment for sins committed (1:1–32:32). However, like all the prophets, he also provided his people, now without a land of their own, some hope for the future (33:1–48:35).<sup>8</sup>

According to Charles Swindoll, The book of Ezekiel pronounces judgment on both Israel and surrounding nations, but it also provides a vision of the future millennial kingdom that complements and adds to the vision of other Old and New Testament texts.<sup>9</sup> However, in this sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, written around 597 BC, one can gain understanding as to why God's judgment was continuous as Israel's disobedience was unceasing. The judgment of God reveals His love for humanity as His people. As it was now so it was during this time in the life of Ezekiel.

Israel once again had turned her back on God. J. E. Smith, in his book *The Major Prophets*, stated:

God had brought charges against His people. They had come to trust in her beauty, and her material prosperity. In association with other nations she played the harlot...she was unfaithful to God. She had an affair with every willing

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<sup>7</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, <http://www.insight.org/resources/bible/ezekiel.html> (accessed March 4, 2015).

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

passer-by. Ezekiel vividly depicted Israel's involvement with every idolatrous cult of the ancient Near East."<sup>10</sup>

In addition, "Israel used garments to make and decorate high places where she committed harlotry. Gold, silver and jewels were fashioned into idols which became objects of harlotry."<sup>11</sup>

The people during that time had become so corrupted, Smith stated, that Israel took her sons and daughters whom she had borne to the Lord and offered them as sacrifices to their idols. She actually slaughtered God's children and caused them to "pass through the fire."<sup>12</sup>

It is the writer's opinion that if society fails to educate young children and enhance their reading skills it is equivalent to the nation of Israel's sacrificing their children and passing them through the fire. Ezekiel's message was harsh because the people had ignored numerous warnings. Matthew Henry stated that

Sacrificing their children to idols was the worst instances of their idolatry. There was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affection as in this. Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>J. E. Smith, *The Major Prophets Old Testament Survey Series* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992).

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible: Complete and unabridged in one volume* (1368) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

Henry continued: “yet that was not the worst of it, it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children more than in their gold and silver.”<sup>14</sup>

According to Henry, “One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation: to see the pitiless hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their children, and by offering those pieces of themselves to the devil for buying sacrifices openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices!”<sup>15</sup> When the parents, the school system, and our government fail to properly educate children, by offering up pieces of themselves to the devil, this will eventually have an impact on our society as a whole. The use of Bible stories to enhance grade level reading and other teaching models should be important to everyone.

While the educational institution sometimes excels in enhancing the reading skills of students, in today’s economy every known teaching tool available should be used. Henry stated that

the children of parents that are members of the visible church are to be looked upon as born unto God and His children; as such, and under that character, we are to love them and pray for them, bring them up for him and, if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him.<sup>16</sup>

Ezekiel’s message was loud, bold, and harsh. He was sent by God to sound the alarm to God’s people in exile and make them aware of their abomination of sacrificing and slaughtering God’s children that they had borne to him. In the same way this

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

researcher feels that she must bring awareness to the masses. Her voice is the amplified voice for the millions of helpless children across America who are not reading at grade level. She augments the message that this ongoing slaughtering for more than fifty years will no longer be tolerated. She herself was a victim of the slaughter and understands its gravity. It is now time to reach children so that their reading level will improve and they can excel. They say "It takes a village to raise a kid." That saying must not be taken lightly. Even more in the twenty-first century than in previous times, it will take the neighborhood and community to provide instruction for all children to read at grade level. Authors have written many books stating it is possible for children to read at grade level. Statistics are numbers that can change for the better or for the worse. It is imperative that they change for the better from the 80 percent at present.

### **New Testament**

Ephesians 6:4, "And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the LORD. " NRSV

The place from which Paul undoubtedly wrote the letter to the Ephesians was Rome; and he most likely wrote it during his first Roman imprisonment, which was for two years (Acts 28:30). This would make the date of this Epistle somewhere around AD 62. It was no doubt delivered by Tychicus, who was entrusted with it (Eph. 6:21) as well as the one Paul sent to Colossae (Col. 4:7). Paul did not write this letter to the Ephesians to rebuke them for any irregularity of conduct, like he did the Corinthians, nor for any perversion of the gospel, as he did the Galatians. His letter was one of joyous praise for God's eternal purpose. As such, it would serve as an antidote to the pagan mystery religions which were all around these people, and to the arguments of the Judaizers who were using all their powers of persuasion to impress these former pagans, who had prided

themselves as guardians of the great Temple of Diana, with the pomp and ceremony of Judaism, along with its Jerusalem Temple.<sup>17</sup>

In the book of Ephesians is a solution similar to that of the prophet Ezekiel, who was sent by God to carry a message to the Israelites. Paul was called out, prepared and equipped by God to go forth and carry a message to His people, the Gentiles. The scripture to be analyzed is Ephesians 6:4, “And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the LORD.”<sup>18</sup> This scripture speaks to this project and fits within its scope because as children learn to read the Scriptures, this reading can help to improve grade level reading; also the children will be equipped to make appropriate choices and ultimately become followers of Jesus.

In this scripture the Apostle addresses the relationship and responsibility of Christian parents with and toward their child/children. Paul’s words are directed primarily to the father; however, in today’s society mothers serve as fathers and fathers serve as mothers in certain situations. Parents are to supplement the teaching of the church and they are to apply the teaching of the church in their home training of the child; that statement would indicate that the church also has a responsibility to the children, as well as to the parents.<sup>19</sup>

Paul was born a Pharisee and practiced strict laws. He was converted, through an act of divine revelation; spending time alone to hear from God Paul wrote a large portion of the New Testament. Jesus said to Paul, “I am sending you to them,” using the words

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.allanturner.com/eph.html> date (accessed March 26, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 6:4 NRSV.

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd-Jones and David Martyn, *Life in the Spirit, In Marriage, Home, & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18- 6:9* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1973), 295.

God had spoken to Ezekiel when God commissioned him as a prophet (Ezek. 2:3).<sup>20</sup> Paul set an example as to how a non-Christian who doesn't have godly parents can be converted. On the road to Damascus Paul yielded to the heavenly call of Jesus. T. C. Smith, author of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, wrote: "The most effective message to proclaim in the modern age is the assurance that the power of Christ has changed lives. Paul's testimony before King Agrippa was his personal experience."<sup>21</sup> Smith went on to give Paul's account of the text in Acts 26:18:

In yielding to the heavenly call, Paul became an apostle of Christ to the Gentile world and renounced his commission from the chief priests. The apostle told the king that Christ commanded him to proclaim to others what he himself had experienced. His eyes had been opened. He had been delivered from darkness and saw the light. His sins were forgiven, and the power of Satan over his life had been broken. He had found a place among those dedicated to Christ by faith. If such a marvelous change could occur in his life, it could also happen to others.<sup>22</sup>

Smith wrote that Paul was a member of the strictest sect of Judaism, the Pharisees. When Paul said "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light," this was an Old Testament prophecy depicting the coming of the Messiah.<sup>23</sup> Kistemaker wrote that although the work of opening spiritual eyes belongs to the Holy Spirit, it is that same Holy Spirit who empowers God's servants, those he calls, to preach the gospel and

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<sup>20</sup>Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1990), 897.

<sup>21</sup>T. C. Smith, *The Broadman Bible Commentary: Volume 10, Acts-1 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1970), 142.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 898.

see the effects of such preaching. It is the Good News that opens the spiritually blinded eyes and turns them from darkness to light.<sup>24</sup>

Paul understood that he was to reach out to others; he understood that it was not he that was changing the hearts and minds of the people. Just as it was with Ezekiel, Paul would be held fully accountable to deliver the message of the Good News to the Gentiles; if he did his part he would not be held accountable for how the people responded. Lloyd-Jones concluded:

I say to Christian people, and to all who are in any way responsible for the discipline of children and of young people, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus’. And let the same love be in us also, lest we provoke our children to wrath and thereby involve them and ourselves in all the evil consequences of our failure.”<sup>25</sup>

This passage speaks to this project because God is concerned when little children cannot read. Just as God sent Paul to the Gentiles, in an urban context today He possesses a remnant of people who must go to the neighborhoods of low-income children to engage them in scripture reading, which could improve their grade level reading and lead them into a productive Christian lifestyle.

What does the Bible say about education? The parent is the God-appointed leader and teacher of a child. This should come as no surprise to anyone, including a non-Christian. The overwhelming task of raising a child is in the hands of the parents.<sup>26</sup> But teach what? Clearly, God has a great deal to say about this. But before that question is

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Jones and Martyn, 288.

<sup>26</sup>[http://www.discoverchristianschools.com/learn\\_about/what\\_the\\_bible\\_says\\_about\\_education](http://www.discoverchristianschools.com/learn_about/what_the_bible_says_about_education) (accessed March 26, 2015).



answered, another must be dealt with: “What or who is the most important thing or person for the child to know?” The answer is: God is the most important person for a child to know. “The goal of Christian parents is for their child to know God in a personal way and to know all about God.”<sup>27</sup> Nothing could be more important.

With those two simple facts in place as the foundation for discussion, it is time to look at what God has specifically said. God has said that the education of children and youth is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week process that must take place from birth through maturity.<sup>28</sup>

Paul received his education from his mother until the age of five. From age five to ten he studied with his father in the Hebrew Scriptures and traditional writings. At the same time, being a Roman citizen and living in a Greek and Roman environment, he received a thorough education in the Greek language, history, and culture.<sup>29</sup> He was sent to Jerusalem at about the age of ten to attend the rabbinical school of Gamaliel, who was the son of Simeon, the son of Hillel. Gamaliel was the most eminent rabbi who was mentioned both in the Talmud and in the New Testament (Acts 5:24-40, 22:3). Gamaliel was called Rabban—one of only seven teachers so called.<sup>30</sup> There were two great rabbinical schools, those of Hillel and Schammai. Hillel, the grandfather of Gamaliel, held that tradition was superior to the Law. The school of Schammai despised traditionalists, especially when their teachings clashed with the writings of Moses. The religious school of Gamaliel (Hillel) was chiefly oral and usually had a prejudice against any book but the Scriptures. They used a system of scriptural exegesis, and Josephus in his writings

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<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/paul.html> (accessed March 26, 2015).

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

expressed the wish to have such a power of exegesis. When school was in session, learned men met and discussed scriptures, gave various interpretations, suggested illustrations, and quoted precedents. The students were encouraged to question, doubt, and even contradict.<sup>31</sup>

When Paul became a Christian, his thorough education was enormously helpful. He was able to assimilate Christian doctrines rapidly and relate them accurately to the scriptural teaching he had received. From his education, both from Gamaliel and in the desert from the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul developed a divine viewpoint toward human history.<sup>32</sup>

The great duty of children is to obey their parents. That obedience includes inward reverence as well as outward acts, and in every age prosperity has attended those distinguished for obedience to parents. The duty of parents is: Be not impatient; use no unreasonable severities. Deal prudently and wisely with children; convince their judgments and work upon their reason. Bring them up well; under proper and compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of the duty God requires.<sup>33</sup>

Even though the Apostle Paul made no mention of education it is a must if parents are to rear their children to face society. A part of parents' duties is to instill in their children not only the love of God but a desire to succeed in life through the gift of reading and writing skills. Children can learn early in life to read the Scriptures and

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<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup><http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/paul.html> (accessed March 26, 2015).

<sup>33</sup><http://www.christnotes.org/commentary.php?com=mhc&b=49&c=6> (accessed March 26, 2015).

improve their reading skills and enhance their love for God and parents. Just as important as it is for our children to know God, it is important for them to read and write.

To whom did Paul write? He wrote to Christian parents. Why is that important? These Christians were given the job and authority to teach their children the word of God. The use of Bible stories not only improve reading, but these stories will help parents obey the admonition of Paul to bring their child up in the fear of the Lord. The Apostle Paul has said “this is right” regarding children’s obedience to their parents in the Lord. Therefore non-Christian children need godly teachers and Christian leaders to teach reading skills. These leaders can instruct all children so that they can make proper decisions to change from the practice of idolatry to the obedience of God.

Brian Edward wrote,

Hermeneutics is not a matter of theory, it always has a practical application. Hermeneutics is the servant of exegesis. “Exegesis” comes from the Greek word, meaning “to explain.” The preacher and Bible teacher are exegetes because they must explain the message of the Bible and apply it to the lives of those listening. But the exegete cannot explain or apply the Scripture unless he has clear principles for interpreting or understanding it. In other words, you cannot be involved in exegesis unless you first understand hermeneutics.<sup>34</sup>

Ernest R. Campbell has offered a better clarity of Paul’s audience. He wrote: “Paul is giving instruction to the Christian parents. Paul is commanding Christian children.”<sup>35</sup> Campbell stated that it was outside of Paul’s jurisdiction to say anything about how the unsaved should live.

“And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Under the Roman Law, the father had absolute

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<sup>34</sup>Brian Edwards. *Nothing But The Truth* (Avon, Great Britain: Bath Press, 1993). 238.

<sup>35</sup>Ernest R. Campbell, *Ephesians* (Silverton, OR: Canyonview Press, 1986), 231.

power over his family. He could sell them as slaves; he could make them work in his field, even in chains; he could take the law into his own hands and he could punish as he liked; he could even inflict the death penalty on his child. Further, the power of the Roman father extended over the child's whole life, so long as the father lived. A Roman son never came of age.<sup>36</sup> It would be easy under such laws to provoke a child, and Boice gave several examples of how the father could do such.

Lloyd-Jones wrote: "The moral tone of the whole society has been raised; even those who have not become Christians have been influenced and affected by it."<sup>37</sup> While Paul never addressed unbelievers or told them how to live, he has laid a foundational pattern that can be used for non-believing families to model after. This scripture speaks to this project because many urban children are from non-Christian homes. A Christian teacher or leader must utilize the Apostle Paul's instructions as to how to bring children up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord, to provide Christian teaching that will help set a standard for the non-Christian child. In his commentary on Ephesians, Campbell considered the words "nurture" and "admonition" with regard to "And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but nurture them in the training and admonition of the Lord." He stated that nurture requires action and admonition puts greater emphasis upon the speech that is used. Campbell added that fathers have the responsibility as the head of the home.

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<sup>36</sup>James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 211.

<sup>37</sup>Jones and Martyn, 293.

Non-Christian parents also have a duty to their children. There is a negative and a positive aspect in raising children, for both Christians and non-Christians. The negative component of this scripture tells parents what not to do and the positive component tells parents how to bring children up so that they will be productive and fruitful citizens.

Paul's message was more instructional in comparison with Ezekiel's. The laity must step up to intercede on behalf of children who are in a national crisis that has gone unchecked for decades because children are not reading at grade level. A simple plan expounding on what can be done for improvement and effectiveness is a call for commitment, responsibility and action to ensure that our children are no longer left behind, but excelling in the present; it is important to always be mindful that children are the future leaders. "No child left behind" was initially adopted in the twentieth century; in the twenty-first century it is time for implementation of a written plan for the 80 percent of low-income children not reading at grade level across America. Paul has provided the template.

### **Historical Foundation**

How have the church and society historically dealt with the problem of illiteracy, particularly child illiteracy? As the writer pondered on the question of how the problem of her text has been demonstrated and dealt with by the church and society, she has reflected on numerous sources dating back as far as Bible times in ancient Israel, a time when literacy and the ability to read was non-existent. The writings in this text will show that problems of illiteracy have been dealt with by humans with compassion for people. This paper will present the life circumstances of two people whose roles were influential in improving grade level reading among low-income children through the engagement of

the Scriptures and other reading models. These two inspiring people are Robert Raikes, who was a printer and editor of the *Gloucester Journal Newspaper* in England, and Marva Collins, a school teacher in Chicago, Illinois.

Before the Bible was a written text it was oral communication. In his book, *Early Christianity: A Brief History*, Joseph H. Lynch wrote that early followers spread the gospel verbally. “The people with the message went out into the places where the people who needed to hear the ‘Good News’ were. They preached, taught, gave accounts of Jesus during their worship and sang about him.”<sup>38</sup> William Schniedewind discussed the textualization, writing and literacy in ancient Israel in his book *How The Bible Became A Book*. “The people who were accustomed to hearing the word only, the lay population, was highly illiterate.”<sup>39</sup> Writing did not have a real significance in the early Israelite society. According to Schniedewind, a large portion of the oral Torah was written in the eighth through the sixth centuries BC, in the days of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The process involved the invention of alphabets, and the invention of the Gutenberg printing press brought about technological change.<sup>40</sup> Historically illiteracy can be dated back as far as the eighth century BC. The introduction to the Old Testament describes the Old Testament as being God’s word to his people through the ages. Through it one can gain a clearer understanding of who God is and how he or she should live. God’s word teaches, reveals, and even plant seeds for people to grow.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Joseph H. Lynch, *Early Christianity: A Brief History* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010), 3.

<sup>39</sup>William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> NLT Study Bible, 3.

Donald M. Joy stated, “In the early centuries of the church, no provision was made for the education of children, either in basic literacy or in Christian faith.”<sup>42</sup> “Not until the decades following the Reformation did Christian’s concern focus upon basic literacy education for children in general or upon usefulness of Bible study in the education of the young.”<sup>43</sup>

Martin Luther was committed to a broad education of children. But it was John Amos Comenius, late in the sixteen century, who urged a thoroughly Christian education for all children. Comenius, Philip Spener, and August Hermann Francke were the moving forces who introduced Bible study to Christian education in any large sense. The early centuries had employed a certain amount of Scripture in the rote teaching of catechumens, but the printing press now made possible the wider use of Scripture. It was to become for several centuries the chief means of teaching reading.<sup>44</sup>

It was Robert Raikes’ Sunday School movement in England that played a vital role for literacy among children in America. Joy stated that Robert Raikes’ early Sunday schools were as much aimed at bringing basic literacy to the deprived chimney sweeps on Sooty Alley as they were to bringing them salvation. Joy wrote: “When the Sunday school movement leaped to America, it became less and less a literacy program and increasingly a gospel agency.”<sup>45</sup> These teaching sessions were called “Sunday Schools” not because they were related to the Bible teaching of the church, but because the school

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<sup>42</sup>Robert E. Clark, Joanne Brubaker, and Roy B. Zuck, *Childhood Education in the Church* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1986), 9.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 10-11.

was held on Sundays. “Raikes sometimes referred to these schools as ‘My little project for civilizing the rising generation of the poor.’”<sup>46</sup>

### **Robert Raikes, Sunday School Movement Pioneer**

The year 1736 will ever be memorable in the history of Christianity, because it gave birth to two of the most noble philanthropists with whom the world has been blessed in any age – Robert Raikes and William Fox. They were born not only in the same year, but on the same day of the month, though not the same month, and in the same county. Starting near each other, their path diverged at to unite in due time in systematizing the most successful mode of training the youthful mind for the reception of the truths contained in the Holy Scripture of which the world has any knowledge. When we see how admirably the different parts of the work by Raikes and Fox united to form a perfect edifice, who can doubt that they were workmen executing the designs of a Master hand.<sup>47</sup>

Robert Raikes is given the title and honor of being the founder of Sunday schools. However, many people interpret Sunday school as related to the church alone and associate the term to the teaching of the Bible for children. Nevertheless, Raikes’ Sunday school could have easily been a Tuesday school or a Thursday school. His main goal was to teach young children to improve their reading in order to become better citizens. In the book *Founders of Christian Movements*, by Philip Henry Lotz, a contributing writer to this volume, A. J. W. Myers, wrote of the ragged children and gave an account of how the school that is called Sunday school got its name. This is the conversation;

“Do these miserable mobs of children belong to this part of town?” “Sir, you should see this place on Sunday! The pin factories and other shops are shut then, and the noise and riot, the cursing and swearing, make this place a hell. There is no self restraint.” “Do the parents not care?” “They are totally abandoned themselves and ignorant.” “What of the church?” “We have a good rector. He has

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<sup>46</sup>Philip Henry Lotz, *Founders of Christian Movements* (Freeport, New York: Books For Libraries Press, 1941), 2.

<sup>47</sup>John Carroll Powers, *The Rise and Progress of Sunday Schools: A Biography of Robert Raikes and William Fox* (New York: Sheldon and Company Publisher, 1868), 50-51.



got some to go to school. But what can be done with this rabble on Sunday?" The Stranger says that one word kept throbbing in his mind—the little word "Try, try, try." "Are there any decent, well-disposed women in the neighborhood, who keep 'kitchen' or 'dame' schools for teaching reading." "Yes indeed. Three or four such," and she pointed out where they lived. The Stranger called on the rector and then went to the four teachers, and a dialogue like this ensued, after the general opening polite conversation: "If you were paid for it, would you undertake to teach some of these heathen from the streets every Sunday?" "What age children? Some from the streets are too big to handle." "We would enroll only those six to twelve or perhaps fourteen years of age." "What would I teach them?" "Well, reading, the Bible, and the catechism. *Vice is preventable. Being with the child.*" "What hours?" "Those can be agreed on. Suppose we start with having them from ten to twelve in the morning, have them come back at one for a few minutes, then go to church, and repeat the catechism till, say, five thirty. I will pay one shilling a Sunday." "We will make one rule. Any who come must have clean hands and face, and hair combed. Doubtless they cannot afford good clothes, but if they can be on the street they can come to school." "As for moral support, the rector promises to try to get them to come, and he and I will visit every Sunday. We will have little gifts to encourage those who do well." So the work began. Meetings on Sundays, they were called "Sunday Schools."<sup>48</sup>

In 1780 Raikes hired four women to teach children on Sundays; they were to instruct the children in reading and catechism. This was not the first Sunday school; in the 1770s Sunday school had been formed in neighboring villages, but they did not have the impact on the children that Raikes' school accomplished.<sup>49</sup> According to John Ferguson in his book *Christianity Society And Education*, The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was founded in 1698. In the early eighteenth century Charity schools were adopted for education of the "inferior ranks." By 1730 there were approximately 1500 of these schools, teaching more than 22,000 pupils.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Lotz, 1-2.

<sup>49</sup>John Ferguson, *Christianity Society and Education* (Great Britain: Camelot Press Ltd, Southampton, 1981), 41.

<sup>50</sup>Ferguson, 15.

Raikes was the eldest son of a gentleman of the same name, and little is known of his childhood. He spent some time in the University of Cambridge but never graduated in any department of it, as he preferred being brought up to business. “His father was the printer and publisher of a newspaper called the *Gloucester Journal*. Raikes’ father died when he was twenty one years of age, and he succeeded him in the publication of the *Journal*.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1785 William Fox, a Baptist Industrialist in London, founded the first society for promotion of Sunday schools, and he set forth as his purpose: “To prevent vice, to encourage industry and virtue, dispel the ignorance of darkness, to diffuse the light of knowledge, to bring men cheerfully to submit to their stations.”<sup>52</sup>

The organization of Sunday Schools would be an appropriate event to celebrate—but of that we do not know the exact date—not even the year; it was 1781 or ‘2, we know not which. The birthday of Raikes and Fox would also be an appropriate event to celebrate, but to notice one and not the other would be only half doing the work. They will also hand down the names of Robert Raikes and William Fox as noble examples of genuine philanthropy, who were willing to lay aside their denominational peculiarities, and unite their efforts for the glory of God and the good of mankind.<sup>53</sup>

Raikes’ dedication was mainly to children and their parents:

When Raikes was in Windsor, he was invited to an audience with Queen Charlotte, who said that she envied those who had the power of doing good by thus personally promoting the welfare of society in giving instruction and morality to the general mass of the common people, a pleasure from which by her position she was debarred. Her husband, George III, visited a Sunday school in

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<sup>51</sup>Lotz, 81.

<sup>52</sup> Grover L. Hartman, *A school for God’s People: A History of Sunday School Movement in Indiana* (Indianapolis, IN: Central Publishing CO, 1980), 2.

<sup>53</sup>Lotz, 88-89.

Brentford and wished that “every child in my kingdom” should be taught to read the Bible. Before long many thousands of children were attending Sunday schools. Raikes’s grain of mustard seed had grown, and in 1794 he published a Sunday Scholar’s Companion which contained graded scriptural sentences for the child to read as his proficiency improved.<sup>54</sup>

Raikes’ Sunday school movement had far reaching effects; through the social discipline numerous common people were spared punishment under the cruel law of the land, bringing a robust and influential relationship within the community. As the printer and editor of *The Gloucester Journal*, Raikes’ position allowed him to disseminate educational material to hundreds of thousands. On November 3, 1783, Raikes wrote an article in his newspaper:

Some of the clergy in different parts of the country bent upon attempting a reform among the children of the lower class, are establishing Sunday Schools, for the rendering of the Lord’s day subservient to the ends of instruction, which has hitherto been prostituted to band purposes. Farmers (farmers was most pertinent, the country being chiefly agriculture) and other inhabitants of towns and villages, complain they receive more injury in their property on the Sabbath, than all the week besides: This in a great measure proceeds from the lawless state of the younger class, who are allowed to run wild, on that day, free from any restraint. To remedy this evil, persons duly qualified are employed to instruct those that may have learned to read, are taught the catechism, and conducted to church. By thus keeping their minds engaged, the day passes profitably, and not disagreeably. In those parishes where this plan has been adopted, we are assured that the behavior of the children is greatly civilized. The barbarous ignorance, in which they had before lived, being in some degree dispelled; they begin to give proofs that those persons are mistaken, who consider the lower order of mankind as incapable of improvement, and therefore think an attempt to reclaim them impracticable, or at least not worth the trouble.<sup>55</sup>

In his book *A School for God’s People: A History of the Sunday School*

*Movement in Indiana*, Grover L. Hartman disputed the idea that Robert Raikes had the

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<sup>54</sup>Ferguson, 43.

<sup>55</sup>Ferguson, 25-26.

first Sabbath school. John Wesley agreed; and in his book *John Wesley: A Biography*, Stephen Tomkins wrote, “In High Wycombe in 1769, Hannah Ball started the first children’s Sunday school, beating Robert Raikes, to whom the credit usually goes, by 11 years.”<sup>56</sup> Hartman went on to give Raikes recognition, stating that the Sunday school movement in England and America stemmed from Raikes. He detailed Raikes’ many challenges, including attacks from the church body for hiring four lay women to teach the children of the streets in a storehouse in England. In 1824 the American *Sunday School Teacher’s Magazine* listed Isabella Graham and her daughter Joanna Bethune of the New York City Sunday school as the first in the United States to use the Raikes pattern for Sunday school.<sup>57</sup> Indiana’s second Sunday school was fashioned more after Raikes’ pattern. In 1816, a church in Madison, Indiana, was recognized for teaching the poor and friendless young to read and write in a room where a woman taught a private school during the week. An account is given of a group of women who went out to the streets looking for the poor children who could not read.

Went around amongst the poor and friendless little boys and girls, got them to promise to come to the school and then provided them with decent clothing so they might come together. They were not looking after children of the church members but hunting up neglected ones. A young woman whom Dr. Little knew met a bright looking boy on the street. She found that he could not read, that his brothers couldn’t read and he named off six boys in the neighborhood who couldn’t read either. The woman invited the lads to her Sunday school in a room where she taught a private school during the week. There she taught them to read and write. Thus it was nameless “godly women” who started what may have been Indiana’s second Sunday school.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 167.

<sup>58</sup>Hartman, 2.

<sup>58</sup>Hartman, 8.

But the pioneer Sunday schools of Indiana were not predominantly the product of missionaries, either of the Union or of the missionary societies of the eastern seaboard. Almost without exception they were the result of consecrated effort on the part of Hoosier citizens—mostly lay men and women who caught a vision of what Sunday school could mean.<sup>59</sup>

When the Sunday school movement was introduced to America the literacy component was decreased and the gospel became more the emphasis. By the twentieth century more programs were developed to teach moral and spiritual education. Groups such as Awana Youth Association and Christian Youth Crusaders introduced Christian education programs for children; the primary concern was discipleship and salvation.<sup>60</sup> God raised up compassionate people whom He equipped to take His word and delivered it to the people whom He wanted to hear it. Society has also taken an approach to deal with the problem of illiteracy.

D. Campbell Wyckoff wrote in his book *Renewing the Sunday School and the CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine)* that the Sunday school and the CCD today cannot be described as normal; they are weakened by severe criticism and by structural changes, creating a situation of urgency.<sup>61</sup> Wyckoff discussed the assessment and redirection to get the Sunday school back on track. In the book *Children's Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, written by multiple authors, Ty Bryant discussed the issue of "Reaching And Keeping Today's Preteens." Bryant wrote that the twenty-first century church should

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<sup>59</sup>Hartman, 5.

<sup>60</sup>Clark, et al., 11.

<sup>61</sup>D. Campbell Wyckoff, *Renewing the Sunday School and the CCD* (Religious Education Press, 1986).

be focused on employing staff specifically called to minister to pre-teens.<sup>62</sup> Bryant continued: “That it is estimated that 31 million children in America between the ages of 5 and 12 are forming lifelong habits, values, beliefs and forming attitudes, and for this reason the church must intentionally reach out to these children.”<sup>63</sup> Bryant spoke on a multitude of issues that are major challenges for young children in today’s world:

Our current generation of preteens isn’t easily moved or surprised. I say this because the average 8- to 13- year old spends 48 hours per week either watching TV, playing video games, listening to music, going to the movies, working on the computer (going online), and/or engaging in some kind of mass media. The internet is, by far, the most popular form of media consuming our preteens’ time. From personal Web spaces to online games to instant messaging, even students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades spend hours a day online. While some are star-struck by celebrity, they generally don’t seem to have a role model.<sup>64</sup>

In his well-documented statement Bryant echoed out the urgency that is needed for outreach workers to adhere to the call of God and provide the tool that is needed to teach, reach, and save young children who have been thrown into the fire.

The church continues to deal with the problem plaguing young children through outreach. In her book *Vacation Bible School*, Doris A. Freese wrote that children must be trained in Christian living, and that adults must set an example for them and encourage them to practice what they have learned.<sup>65</sup> Reese noted that the history of Vacation Bible School can be found as far back as 1894, when a pastor’s wife was concerned that

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<sup>62</sup>Ty Bryant, *Children’s Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, The Encyclopedia of Practical Ideas, Group Publishing: 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2006 147.

<sup>63</sup>Bryant, 148.

<sup>64</sup>Bryant, 148.

<sup>65</sup>Doris A. Freese, *Vacation Bible School: A Current Approach To A Proven Program* Wheaton, IL” Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 1997, 7.

Sunday school was not offering a thorough knowledge of the Bible. The pastor's wife reached out:

She conducted a month-long school with 37 children in four departments. In 1898, Everyday Bible School was held at Epiphany Baptist Church in New York City. Bible stories and Bible memorization were emphasized. In 1901, Dr. Robert Boville, executive secretary of the New York Baptist City Mission Society, held a series of schools. He is credited with formal organization of the VBS movement.<sup>66</sup>

Vacation Bible School, its creative outreach methods, and Christian education are another way the church has dealt with the problems mentioned in this paper's biblical text. This was an outreach strategy. People went out and ministered Christian education to turn the people's heart to God. How did the flame of the Vacation Bible School movement grow dim?

Historically society has been involved in outreach to save children; however, efforts have been based on a wrong understanding. Larry W. Sharp, UFM International, wrote the foreword in the book *Street Children, An Effective Guide To Ministry*:

The world's most precious resource is being thrown out into the street, considered "vermin" and "garbage." In today's world of desperate poverty and family dysfunction, concerned parents are rare and the government has all but given up. Christians must mobilize and provide strategic intervention in neighborhoods, parks, streets, and centers so that these "little ones" are rescued from the violent, exploitative, evil society around them. It is not an easy task, as the chapters in this book will demonstrate, but respond we must. To our Lord Jesus, such children are not trash—they are treasures!<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Freese, 5.

<sup>67</sup>Phyllis Kilbourn, *Street Children: A Guide to Effective Ministry*, 3. Monrovia, CA: MARC Publishing, 1997.

<sup>68</sup>Robert E. Clark, Joanne Brubaker, Roy B. Zuck, *Childhood Education In The Church*, 34-35. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986.

The work being done must be evaluated, not merely scientifically but ethically and spiritually.<sup>68</sup> The knowledge children receive must be assessed because it is this secular education that helps them to form attitudes and beliefs. Who is responsible to reach and teach these innocent children? Sunday schools, parents, or other secular individuals? A proposed solution is to identify methods of outreach from both church and society and incorporate those variations in the mission to teach young children how to read.

Robert Raikes played a monumental role in improving the reading skills of low-income and poor children through the engagement of the Scriptures in England and America. In the book *Founders of Christian Movements*, A. J. W. Myers wrote:

Robert Raikes was born on in 1736 in Gloucester, England. Raikes died in his house in Bell Lane, Gloucester, England, on April 5, 1811, at the age of seventy-five and is buried in the ancient church of St. Mary de Crypt. His grave was marked by a simple slab of marble, two feet square, in a dark corner, and no mention is made on it of his founding the Sunday school. It often happens that a prophet is not recognized in his own time, nor the value of his work appreciated. But a century later, in 1880, a statue was erected to him on the Thames Embankment, one of the most prominent sites in the great city of London. Where he lived in Gloucester is now a place of pilgrimage for people from all over the world. But his real monument is the vast Sunday school population throughout the whole world. The figures are astonishing—more than thirty million, with more than three million teachers and officers! Compared to this, monuments of brass or marble are insignificant.<sup>69</sup>

Raikes' philanthropy, compassion and genuineness made it possible for millions of children and adults to improve their reading skills and go on in life to become productive citizens.

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<sup>69</sup>Lotz, 8.



### Marva Collins: Teacher/Educator

Two hundred years after Raikes lived and worked to help children learn and grow, a twentieth-century historical example of a compassionate individual teaching the unteachable was provided through the life of Marva Collins. She was instructed and inspired by her grandmother in the area of education as “Mama Dear” read the Bible to her. Civia Tamarkin, reporting a cover story on education for *Times* magazine, observed Marva Collins in her classroom and followed her students’ progress for more than a year.

In her book, *Marva Collins’ Way*, by Marva Collins and Civia Tamarkin, Collins wrote:

I learned to read before I was old enough to go to school. My grandmother used to read aloud to me from her Bible, sounding out words by syllables.” Collins states, “Once I discovered how to sound out words, I tried reading everything I could get my hands on: labels on cans and boxes, farmer’s almanac, newspapers, books of fairy tales and fables, and especially Grandma Annie Knight’s huge black-leather Bible.”<sup>70</sup> Ms. Collins went on to write, “My introduction to literature began with the Bible stories I heard from my grandmother. Mama-Dear read her Bible every day.”<sup>71</sup>

Collins stated that her grandmother was forever reciting proverbs. “Time and Tide wait for no man. Good that comes too late is good for nothing. ‘Baby,’ she would say to me, ‘a good name will go farther than you will.’” Collins wrote, “I got so tired of hearing those proverbs when I was a child. Now I use them all the time. Sometimes they are the

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<sup>70</sup> Marva Collins and Civia Tamarkin, *Marva Collins’ Way* (Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1982), 40.

<sup>71</sup> Collins and Tamarkin, 40.

best way of saying what needs to be said. I teach them to my students. I have a collection of proverbs for class discussion and writing assignments”<sup>72</sup>

Marva Collins was born on August 31, 1936, in Monroeville, Alabama. She considered her father to be the smartest person she ever knew, despite the fact that he had only a fourth-grade education. Collins was an only child until she was fourteen years old. Regarding her teaching position at Monroe County Training School, Collins stated, “From the very first day, I felt comfortable teaching. With some experience conducting Sunday school classes at church, I was used to standing up and speaking before a group. I liked being around people and helping them to understand things.”<sup>73</sup>

In 1959 Collins traveled to Chicago, Illinois, for vacation and decided to stay, continuing to teach. Civia Tamarkin wrote:

Marva Collins had come to the public’s attention. From the ivy-covered walls of Princeton to the grade schools of Wyoming, educators, clamored to attend her workshops, and they flocked to her classroom from as far away as Germany and Spain to observe her technique. Publishers were after her to endorse textbooks; manufacturers wanted her to advertise educational products.<sup>74</sup>

Parents of low achievers looked to Collins as someone who offered hope to their children; she was insistent that old-fashioned values be taught in the classroom.<sup>75</sup>

Learning in Marva Collins’ class was clearly an exciting, shared experience. The children were eager to learn. They waved their hands and jumped up and down in their seats, asking her to call on them. Many of the students were below average; some, in fact, had

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<sup>72</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 40-41.

<sup>73</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 47.

<sup>74</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 14.

<sup>75</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 14.

been tagged with learning disabilities. But their motivation was impressive. Much of the media attention Marva Collins received focused on what she taught—on the fact that she had seven, eight, and nine year-old ghetto children reading and reciting William Shakespeare and Geoffrey Chaucer.<sup>76</sup>

Collins received a letter telling her to report to Calhoun South Elementary School on Jackson Boulevard where she was given a second grade class. She said, “I didn’t have any experience teaching such young children, but I assumed the principles were the same as teaching older students.” Collins continued, “I drew on my own childhood memories, recalling the things that had made me feel happy, sad, excited, hurt, or afraid, the things that made me want to laugh or cry.”<sup>77</sup> Collins said she disregarded the look-say method,<sup>78</sup> which was the school teaching guide. She taught the children how she had learned to read, teaching them to sound out words.

Ms. Collins left the public school after teaching for fourteen years. She wrote:

In July a group of neighborhood women organizing a community school came to see me. Dissatisfied with the public schools, they wanted to start a private elementary school for children in Garfield Park area. They asked me to be director. It sounded wonderful. I had some strong opinions about what a school should be, and here was the chance to apply those ideas. I accepted their offer immediately, without even considering what it took to get a school started. It seemed to me that all I needed were students, some books, and a blackboard.<sup>79</sup>

In an article titled *Marva Collins: Students Model Student Excellence*, it is stated, “Marva Collins is depressed about what’s happening with children in the nation’s public

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<sup>76</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 12.

<sup>77</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 50.

<sup>78</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 51.

<sup>79</sup>Collins and Tamarkin, 79.

schools.”<sup>80</sup> “Not much is expected of our children,” Collins said, “All I hear is, ‘What’s wrong with the parents?’ Parents don’t know where excellence is. If parents knew what was going on in the schools, there would be a revolution.” Excellence was the goal Collins set for herself years earlier when, fed up with the public school system, she yanked her own children out of their “prestigious” schools and opened the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago. She developed her own “Read-by-Three” reading program, set moral and disciplinary standards, and began a program of actually teaching students.<sup>81</sup> Collins stated, “Every child in that school knows that they represent me.” To students, she said, “If I can’t stamp you like a piece of USDA meat, don’t tell anybody you went to my school.” She also said, “I don’t teach poor children, I teach scholars.” Collins suggested that teachers need to get rid of workbooks, cover the chalkboards, and start teaching children. Teachers complained about the students or lack of materials, but she said she hadn’t heard from the teachers, “What’s wrong with me?”<sup>82</sup>

The article “Marva Collins’ Schools Are Urban Success Stories” reported that Collins started Chicago’s Westside Preparatory School on the second floor of her home in 1975 with \$5,000. She was also responsible for a Preparatory School in Cincinnati (MCPSC). In 1990, Mrs. Cleaster Mims started a school with twenty-four students in the basement of the Olivet Baptist Church. With volunteer help, Mrs. Mims and her board of directors were able to purchase the Cincinnati Hebrew Day School building. The article stated:

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<sup>80</sup>Vicki T. Liew, *Students Model Student Excellence* (New York: Amsterdam News 10/14/2004, Vol. 95, Issue 42, pp. 33-33 1/2p EBSCOhost (accessed March 21, 2015).

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

There are now 26 students, with dozens on the waiting list. Virtually all the MCPSC students are from low- and moderate-income households. All are black except two. Grades go from preschool through eighth. Almost 90 percent of the students score at grade level on standardized test. Many score as high as two and a half, and some as high as six, grades above grade level. There was no government agency to help the school with grant money.<sup>83</sup>

According to the article “Marva Collins – Teaching the ‘Unteachable,’” posted February 16, 2013, “Today there are Marva Collins graduates who are politicians, business people, lawyers, doctors, and more than anything, teachers. Because they know what their teacher has done for them.”<sup>84</sup> Throughout history there are numerous examples of other compassionate individuals who reached out to low-income children to improve their reading through the engagement of the Scriptures and the use of other models, and Marva Collins is one of the finest examples.

In his book *Reaching and Teaching Through Vacation Bible School*, Arthur D. Burcham wrote that Dr. Homer L. Grice is of the opinion that Vacation Bible School or the reading of the Scriptures can assist children toward improving their reading skills. Grice said, “Vacation Bible School is an extension of the public schools into the summer vacation time with the Bible as the content. This concept may have been behind his development of a joint service that included three elements coming to public school opening exercises: the pledge to the United States flag, Bible reading, and prayer.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Walter E. Williams, “Marva Collins Schools Are Urban Success Stories,” *National Minority Politics*, Mar 94, Vol. 6, Issue 3, p. 162, Black and White Photographs EBSCOhost (accessed March 21, 2015).

<sup>84</sup> <http://positivepsyched.wordpress.com/2013/02/16/marva-collins-teaching-the-unteachable> (accessed March 21, 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Arthur D. Burcham, *Reaching and Teaching Through Vacation Bible School* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1984), 12.

According to Graeme Paton, an education editor:

The Bible should be used to teach pupils about creative writing because it acts as the ideal template for storytelling, according to academics. The Old and New Testament should be employed to encourage children to learn about characteristics, themes and structuring a narrative.”<sup>86</sup>

And “Researchers from Exeter University said 11-to-14-year olds should be encouraged to learn about such stories as the creation, Noah and the flood, David and Goliath, the nativity, Jesus turning water into wine and the crucifixion—then reinterpret them using a series of literary techniques.”<sup>87</sup>

In the book *Values For Tomorrow’s Children: An Alternative Future for Education in the Church*, John H. Westerhoff III revisited the history of the use of religious institutions toward secular education. He stated:

An accurate evaluation of its importance for religious education may be beyond us, but we do owe these lay Sunday schools a debt of gratitude. For many children these were the only school they knew. Only the privileged had the opportunity to attend those schools which later in the colonies were to become “public” or “common” schools.<sup>88</sup>

He further noted, “Sunday school became the forerunner of public school and church in America.”<sup>89</sup>

The writer’s search for state of the art material led her to a website referring to a curriculum in which the Bible is being used to increase students’ speaking, reading and

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<sup>86</sup>[www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page/71/?s&paged=67](http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/page/71/?s&paged=67) (accessed March 16, 201).

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup>John H. Westerhoff III, *Values For Tomorrow’s Children: An Alternative Future for Education in the Church* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1973), 17.

<sup>89</sup>Westerhoff, 17.

writing skills. The article referred to a Bible-based curriculum called *Bible-based Literacy*, and states that

*Bible-based Literacy* ministry effectively teaches reading and writing skills while providing an introduction to the word of God. Helping the illiterate learn basic reading and writing skills is a proven and effective form of evangelistic outreach. Literacy teachers engage students in Bible reading while raising education levels and living standards. Without the ability to effectively use the written and digital information around them, these individuals face a life of struggle and poverty.<sup>90</sup>

Finally, Rachel Wojo, in her book *Teaching Young Children to Read through Bible Stories*, gives five tips on teaching young children to read through Bible stories. Wojo stated, “Reading empowers children.”<sup>91</sup>

The Sunday-school movement provided perhaps the chief outlet for lay talent. The new schools of thought about the Bible, however, were mainly ministerial and this constituted a second threat. Another strand in the folk tradition is that ordinary Sunday-school teachers don’t necessarily know best what children need. They need to know the Bible, yes. But knowing the Bible from cover to cover doesn’t produce saints! Some of the men who criticized the way the Bible was being used were scholars like Professor Peake, S. R. Driver, Drs Fairbairn, and Garvie to name but a few, but happily they not only attacked an unbending literalism, but they worked for the teaching of the newer understanding of the Bible.<sup>92</sup> By the third generation after 1870 many of the young had come to realize that the Bible no longer mattered and allowed themselves to succumb to

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<sup>90</sup> Literacy-outreach.<http://www.bibleleague.org/what-we-do/how-we-serve/literacyreview> (accessed March 5, 2015).

<sup>91</sup> Rachel Wojo, <http://rachelwojo.com> (accessed March 17, 2015).

<sup>92</sup> Ferguson, 131.

the delights of bicycles, cheap railway fares, dances, music halls, and other such distractions and temptations.<sup>93</sup>

Author John Gardner once said, “Most ailing organizations have developed a functional blindness to their own defects. They are not suffering because they cannot resolve their problems, but because they cannot see their problems.” This statement can be compared to the problems that arise in a nation wherein 80% of low-income children are illiterate. The plan should not be to continue to create new models that do not work but rather to go back to the basics, utilizing the proven model. Einstein put it this way: “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thing we were at when we created them.”<sup>94</sup>

In his book *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth*, Hollis Green wrote, “There are times when old things must not be disturbed, but there are also times when the old and the unworkable must be discarded.”<sup>95</sup> The old way of dealing with educating children worked. It worked time and time again for Robert Raikes, Marva Collins, and the millions who learned to read through the use of the Bible. However, many have become accustomed to the mindset that it is the school system’s duty to educate children, as stated by Rafe Esquith, through a system of scripted reading such as that used by the Los Angeles Unified School District or the look-see method used

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<sup>93</sup>Ferguson, 130.

<sup>94</sup>Stephen R. Covey, *The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: First Free Press, 2004), 19.

<sup>95</sup> Hollis Green, *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth*, Bloomington MN: Bethany House Publisher, 1972.



by the Chicago Public School.<sup>96</sup> These are not effective. As technology evolved numerous models have appeared to improve grade level reading; sometimes progress has been made, but it is not nearly enough.

Children still need someone who is committed and compassionate to teach them to read. Children of all income statuses should be afforded the opportunity to enhance their reading skills. This model is an attempt to reestablish and reaffirm the use of biblical stories to enhance their reading abilities. Appropriately used, this model can be practiced by parents in the convenience of their homes or in other private settings. Unfortunately, there are very few Bible-based models in use today that teach reading and writing skills through Bible stories. Today, most inner city churches provide reading programs; hopefully this model will soon be available to churches everywhere.

### **Theological Foundation**

Change is inevitable. Someone said, “When we are not in the process of growing, we are in the process of dying.” Throughout the streets of this nation today many young children are not growing, and some are even dying prematurely because they are unable to read and write. Children in low-income areas, particularly, are not reading at grade level at an astronomical proportion. The central focus of the writer’s dissertation is to develop and implement a reading model to improve grade level reading among low-income children through the engagement of scripture. This model will demonstrate a transformation in the participant that can be detected by all.

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<sup>96</sup>Rafe Esquith, *Teach Like Your Hair’s On Fire: The Method and Madness Inside Room 56* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), 30.

Transformation is a theology that is new. According to the internet site introducing Transformation Theology, *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* Tenth Edition defines transformation as "an act, process, or instance of transforming or being transformed."<sup>97</sup> In this section, the writer will examine transformation theology from the perspective of low-income, school-aged children being transformed from victims of abuse and neglect, when they cannot read at grade level, to children who improve and excel in reading, allowing them the ability to live a successful, fulfilling life as productive citizens. America is experiencing a national tragedy; elementary schools are overflowing with illiterate children.

This foundation section will examine how the human moves from fragmentation to wholeness. It will explore what authors are saying about transformation. Referencing the book *Now I Can See: A Theology of Transformation*, by Howard Thurman, James Cone, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dante and others, the author will discuss transformation under four general headings:

1. God as Creator, God's Love
2. The Human Condition
3. The Transforming Process and Healing
4. How Christ Transforms Humanity to Wholeness

### **God as Creator, God's Love**

Robert Barron, in his book *Now I See: A Theology of Transformation*, described God's love as follows:

If a man is completely indifferent to a woman, if he has absolutely no vital connection to her, if he is self-satisfied without her, we would hardly describe

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<sup>97</sup>*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1996).

him as being in love with her. By the same token, if a man needs a woman so desperately that he manipulates her or allows himself to be manipulated, the two are in a pathological or neurotic relationship, hardly one of love. But if a man, while retaining his own independence and integrity, gives himself with abandon to a woman, and if she, while never losing her freedom and self-respect, gives herself with complete trust to him, then the two of them can be fairly described as being in love. Love, in short, is neither indifference nor neediness, neither distantiation nor manipulation, but rather a play between independence and self-gift. It is, accordingly, a strange cult to realize and maintain. What we have been analyzing is precisely this odd and compelling *complexion oppositorum* that exists in the very heart of the divine reality, this love that God is.<sup>98</sup>

God is love and he wants all of his creation to experience His love. This love is not automatic and it is not without action.<sup>99</sup> Thurman wrote that “the first step toward love is a common sharing of a sense of mutual worth and value. Failure to come together will poison all normal contact.”<sup>100</sup> The article “8 Preachable Marks of a Transformed Life” by Philip Nation states:

The word “love” is terribly abused in our language. Perhaps it is because we only have one word to refer to our love for a spouse, children, sports team, and pizza. The emphasis necessary for living out our transformation is to understand the purity involved with the Christian ideal of love.<sup>101</sup>

This author often wonders how parents can say they love their children when all across America in low-income neighborhoods, children are suffering an inability to read on grade level. This suffering has handicapped them. Some are even dying from their

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<sup>98</sup>Robert Barron, *And Now I see: A Theology of Transformation* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 148.

<sup>99</sup>Barron, 91.

<sup>100</sup>Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York: Abingdon-Cokebury Press, 1957), 98.

<sup>101</sup>[www.sermoncentral.com/pastor-preaching-articles/philip-nation-8-preachable-marks-of-a-transformed-life-746.asp](http://www.sermoncentral.com/pastor-preaching-articles/philip-nation-8-preachable-marks-of-a-transformed-life-746.asp) (accessed April 1, 2015).

inability to comprehend and the ignorance that follows. Can these poor needy children be loved beyond words? Society must move past talking about this national tragedy and step into action. It must be the kind of action that has been established by many, demonstrated as far back as 1780 by Robert Raikes who became legendary for the Sunday school movement in England, discussed in the historical section of this paper.

The transformation outcome was an example of how God's love can bring hearts together, transform souls, and lead to transformation of a system; it can transform an educational system that has lost hope in a generation of young children and their ability to read and become productive citizens. When transformed souls come together not only are human souls transformed (the souls of the child, parent, teacher or facilitator), but the entire system (schools, communities, churches, organizations, and businesses) is changed, as demonstrated by Marva Collins, discussed in the historical section of this paper. Nation stated, "Love is essentially the choice to value the need of another than our own. Transformation shows a transformed life is marked by genuine love."<sup>102</sup>

### **The Human Condition**

Robert Barron shared the of God. However, the human soul is not naturally comprised of such quality; quite the contrary. Humans are hurt, fragmented and conflicted. A theology of transformation speaks to this project because it is this transformation that can be performed only through the healing touch of Christ. Because of the human condition, every soul is in need of transformation; to attain success in life, a successful soul must be a transformed soul. All souls can be healed, although all souls will not receive healing. Barron wrote, "The human condition is paradoxical, something

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<sup>102</sup>[www.sermoncentral.com/pastor-preaching-articles/philip-nation-8-preachable-marks-of-a-transformed-life-746.asp](http://www.sermoncentral.com/pastor-preaching-articles/philip-nation-8-preachable-marks-of-a-transformed-life-746.asp) (accessed April 4, 2015).

is wrong and yet something is right. Something within is dark and evil, yet something within is bright and good.”

Speaking of the human condition, James Cone described the condition of blacks as “humiliated due to oppression.”<sup>103</sup> He wrote, “Blacks have heard enough about God, what they want to know is what God is going to do about the Black condition. What is the Black condition and how is it different from the White, Indian, Asian, Hispanic condition?”<sup>104</sup> According to Rubem A. Alves, in his book *A Theology of Human Hope*:

the black human condition is that as an oppressed consciousness is that which is domesticated by the situation of oppression in which it finds itself. It is a consciousness which really became reflexive, unable to be subject, deprived of a sense of direction and of historical vocation. Dominated by reflexiveness, this consciousness could not speak. Unable to enter in critical dialogue with their environment, as a consequence of the relationship of domination which oppressed them, these societies became “mute.” The oppressed consciousness, however, is deprived of both these elements [hope and power]. It has no future. The future belongs to the master. Action, therefore, does not create a new future, because it is always determined for the master. The oppressed consciousness, therefore, is incapable of planning the future.<sup>105</sup>

Alves’ point is that as long as blacks are in a state of oppression they are immobilized to move to action. All humans are potential leaders. Mature individuals must stop waiting for someone else to right a wrong; they can take the lead. The children are waiting on adults to advocate for them.

To say that Cone’s interpretation of the human condition is relevant would be appropriate, leading to the focus on black history. Be it liberation and black theology, Christian theology, biblical theology, or systematic theology, the transformation, as stated

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<sup>103</sup>James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 5.

<sup>104</sup>Cone, *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup>Rubem A. Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1972), 10.

earlier, can be performed only through the healing touch of Christ. In his book *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teaching of Jesus Paul and John*, Udo Schnele wrote, “Where God the Creator no longer appears as Giver of life and Giver of meaning, human beings must reorient themselves. Intentionally or unintentionally they take God’s place and realize themselves in the process of actively shaping the world and thereby subjugating it.”<sup>106</sup> Schnele stated, “They do not receive the meaning of their lives but must create it themselves. This activity defines all areas of life; human beings are not oriented toward God but toward themselves and their needs.”<sup>107</sup>

Dante wrote, “There seems to be something profoundly and dangerously wrong with us, a flaw that cannot be wished or thought away, an ineradicable darkness of the heart, a sickness of soul.”<sup>108</sup> The sickness is manifested when 80 percent of low-income elementary children nationwide are not receiving the appropriate teaching to read at grade level. The writer’s research suggests in chapter two, “The State of the Arts,” that several reading models can be utilized to improve children’s reading.

Thurman wrote that children of the disinherited live a restricted childhood.<sup>109</sup> The restriction comes due to the inequality and the lack these children have to endure. Jesus cares about the weak and the deprived, and so should His people. This caring must be transformed into action.

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<sup>106</sup>Udo Schnele, *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teaching of Jesus Paul and John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 145.

<sup>107</sup>Schnele, 145.

<sup>108</sup>Barron, 19.

<sup>109</sup>Thurman, 41.

The man possessed by God's Spirit has no time to ask abstract questions about how the poor got to be poor or why blacks are hated by whites. All he knows is that "the Gestapos are busy again, the prisons are filling up, the torturers are once more inventing, perfecting, consulting over their work benches and he cannot close his eyes to it."<sup>110</sup> It should be pointed out here that the work of the Spirit is not always conscious activity on the part of the persons through whom God works. In fact, God may even use the nonbeliever, as in the age of the Persian emperor Cyrus (Isa. 45). Or He may use persons who are not conscious of being for or against God, but merely against the suffering of men.<sup>111</sup> Our low-income, school-aged children suffer when they cannot read. God can use anybody he chooses to bring His transformation power to correct a wrong.

Authentic living according to the Spirit means that one's will becomes God's will, and one's actions become God's action. It could be that many will be excluded because their motives are ill-founded. And this may mean that God is not necessarily at work in those places where the Word is truly preached and the sacraments are duly administered (as Reformation theologians defined the church), but where the naked are clothed, the sick are visited and the hungry are fed.<sup>112</sup> As described in the researcher's model, God wants low-income, school-aged children to experience improvement and excel in their reading. Black power, although not consciously seeking to be Christian, seems to be where men are in trouble. And to the extent that one is genuinely concerned and seeks to meet the needs of the oppressed, it is the work of God's Spirit. By contrast the self-

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<sup>110</sup>Cone, 58.

<sup>111</sup>Cone, 59.

<sup>112</sup>Cone, 59.

conscious “Christian” person may easily use the poor as a means to his own salvation. The condition of the poor becomes the condition of the Christian, not because he feels sorry for the poor, but because through the Spirit of Christ he is in fact poor, as all acts done on behalf of the poor are nothing in the eyes of God.<sup>113</sup>

Black Power, then, is God’s new way of acting in America. It is his way of saying to blacks that they are human beings; he is saying to whites: “Get used to it!” Whites, as well as some blacks, will find the encounter of Black Power a terrible experience. Like the people of Jesus’ day they will find it hard to believe that God would stoop so low as to reveal himself in and through black people and especially the “undesirable elements.” Cone wrote, “Jesus’ work is essentially one of liberation. Becoming a slave himself, he opens realities of human existence formerly closed to man. Throughout an encounter with Jesus, man now knows the full meaning of God’s action in history and man’s place within it.”<sup>114</sup>

This author does not refute Cone’s writing of liberation; however, Jesus’ work is openly one of transformation. His transforming power changes individuals in comparison to the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly, from bondage to freedom, that permanent change that only he can order. Martin Luther King Jr., in his speech “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” made reference to his personal transformation:

And then I got into Memphis. And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out. What would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers? Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life.

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<sup>113</sup>Cone, 60.

<sup>114</sup>Cone, 35.



Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promise Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promise Land!<sup>115</sup>

Martin Luther King Jr. experienced the sight of not only what it is now, but what it will look like when God's transformation takes place. It will take the love of Christ in man's heart to transform people into what God has declared; and yes, blacks will experience equality, and their school-aged children, as well as all at-risk children, will learn to read on grade level and above.

### **The Transforming Process and Healing**

Again, all souls can be healed, although all souls will not receive healing; and, again, it is the transforming process that will lead the willing soul through the course of change. During this process honesty with oneself will be totally necessary. Sensitive discussion on subjects such as racism, oppression, and the underclass must be voiced. Transformation is the process, the part that will consist of coming together as a whole and doing life a different way, a way that is intended to effectuate a positive advantage not just for the recipients but for all involved.

Contemporary theology from Karl Barth to Jurgen Moltmann conceives of the theological task as one which speaks from within the covenant community with the sole purpose of making the gospel meaningful to the times in which men live. While the gospel itself does not change, every generation is confronted with new problems, and the gospel must be brought to bear on them. Thus, the task of theology is to show what the changeless gospel means in each new situation. On the American scene today, as yesterday, one problem stands out: the enslavement of black Americans. But as we examine what contemporary theologians are saying, we find that they are silent about the enslaved condition of black people. Evidently they see no relationship between black slavery and the Christian gospel.

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<sup>115</sup><http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm> (accessed April 6, 2015).

Consequently there has been no sharp confrontation of the gospel with white racism. There is, then, a desperate need for a black theology, a theology whose sole purpose is to apply the freeing power of the gospel to black people under white oppression.<sup>116</sup>

Cone sensed a problem that needs to be addressed. A theology of transformation is an action that can address and bring forth comparable results to the problem of low-income children not reading on grade level.

In his book *Co-Dependence Healing the Human Condition: The New Paradigm for Helping Professional and People in Recovery*, Charles L. Whitfield wrote:

Our True Self does not yet know how to handle the pain living in a mistreating, abusing or otherwise dysfunctional environment. Feeling overwhelmed, it goes into hiding. Then our false self, ego or co-dependent self comes in to help us survive and function.<sup>117</sup>

Whitefield went on to say:

This “absence” – which is actually only hiding – of the True Self usually brings about a feeling of emptiness, which we may then try to fill with the things outside of ourself. But doing so doesn’t fill us in a lasting or fulfilling way. Only after experiencing the repeated pain of the consequences of addictions, compulsions or other disorders – combined with the ongoing feeling of the emptiness – are we often forced to look within, into our True Self.<sup>118</sup>

It is when people are honest and ready to look within that they can bring Christ and their faith into the process to transition from healing to wholeness. Without Christ’s divine intervention this cycle of oppression and injustice will continue for many generations to come.

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<sup>116</sup>Cone, 31.

<sup>117</sup>Charles L. Whitfield, *Co-Dependence Healing the Human Condition: The New Paradigm for Helping Professional and People in Recovery* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 1991), 33.

<sup>118</sup>Whitfield, 33.

## How Christ Transforms Humanity to Wholeness

Jesus' proclamation is theocentrically oriented. In the coming of God's kingdom, God himself reaches into the present as a loving father and creates a new reality. It is inseparably bound to Jesus, whose words and deeds appear as the bursting forth of the coming dominion of God. The kingdom of God is the anticipatory presence of what is to come. Jesus qualifies his appearance as the beginning of the eschatological salvation (cf. Lk 17:21; 10:23-24 par); in his healings God's kingdom is present (Mt 11:5-6par.; Lk 11:20); faced with the glory of God, Satan must retreat (cf. Mk 3:27; Lk 10:18). In Jesus God himself is acting. When Jesus forgives sinners, he is adopting God's concern. In Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, God himself is seeking the lost. God's original will is heard again in Jesus' ethical radicalisms. The authority of these statements rest not in the Old Testament wording nor in the figure of Moses but solely in the unique authority of the one who says ('but I say to you'). The law no longer has the power to determine access to God. In Jesus' appearance the truly new is dawning (Mk 2:21-22; 'No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins'). In the parable Jesus not only puts God into words; he also brings God so close to people that they let themselves be seized and transformed by his goodness.<sup>119</sup>

This is another example of transformation. God so loved his creation that he sent his only Son to sacrifice his life so that humans in turn could live the fullness of life. This is something only a loving father would do. Howard Thurman wrote: "Grace causes us to follow Jesus."<sup>120</sup> It is when people follow Jesus, when they allow Him to be the example, that they can be healed and made whole. Barron noted: "We are not called to worship Jesus, but to follow Jesus."<sup>121</sup> Following Jesus is the process that will lead to transformation.

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<sup>119</sup>Schnele, 34.

<sup>120</sup>Thurman, 98

<sup>121</sup>Thurman, 98

Barron writes, “God is love and He wants all of his creation to experience His love. This love is not automatic and it is not without action.”<sup>122</sup>

Thurman wrote that the first step toward love is a common sharing of a sense of mutual worth and value. Failure to come together will poison all normal contact.<sup>123</sup>

A transformation of theology speaks to this project because of the need for permanent change, a change that humanity is unable to accomplish. There is a great concern about low-income, school-aged children across America who are not proficiently reading at grade level, and the consequences they will encounter are devastating. This argument is that all people hear the word of God in order to make a decision to serve God and discover the plan He has ordained for their lives. However, church attendance is declining and adults often do not find church or Jesus relevant. If these adults have children, they are being trained with the same spiritual values as their parents. It is unacceptable for low-income children to struggle through life without knowing how to read when there are multiple methods to teach them reading.

### **What Was Christ’s Role in Ministering to Children?**

Illiteracy will keep one trapped in a defeated cycle of fear, hopelessness, helplessness and inferiority. It will take transformation in the hearts of men to manifest

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<sup>122</sup>Barron, 3.

<sup>123</sup>Thurman, 98.

an outward change. Many times people tend to view children as insignificant, but Jesus said to “let the children come unto me” (Matthew 19:14).

### **What Is the Role of the Church in Helping Children Improve Grade Level Reading?**

Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, in their book *Introduction to Theology*, wrote:

Some object that theology moves away from the directness and simplicity of faith and gets overly intellectual, lost in subtle distinctions and abstractions. Such objections fail to recognize that every Christian is a theologian. Every Christian thinks about faith and decides how it relates to a particular situation.<sup>124</sup>

Transformation will be the theology for children to learn to read and make an individual choice. However, they will first need to know the skill of reading.

Although there are many theologies, a theology of transformation will provide the necessary progression to help children that are poor and without hope into a spiritual relationship through reading of scriptures, thus bringing the children to the state that God designed. Children can learn to read at their grade level and enjoy that reading, which will open a new world and a hope for a productive, satisfying future.

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<sup>124</sup>Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002)

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The ministry model project titled “Reaching Our Children: A Model to Improve Grade Level Reading Among Low Income Children Through the Engagement of Scripture,” was held in the context of Second Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, located in Newport, Kentucky. The research design of this project will be the use of a proactive action research design and a qualitative research approach. The intent of this method is to explore and help the writer to understand school-age illiteracy among low-income elementary school children in her context from the participants and other stakeholders’ perspectives. The writer presented the project first. She was involved as an active participant in activities to observe and interpret data. Due to the qualitative approach in nature, a great majority of the data will be presented in text. Data collected will help the writer to determine the outcome.

The writer triangulated three sources of data, utilizing pre- and post-tests, questionnaires and survey, and observation to investigate a phenomenon of illiteracy among elementary level children. The researcher will describe the implementation and evaluation of the model. This model can be replicated and utilized in Sunday school, after school programs, the home, and other contexts with school-age children.

The non-directional hypothesis of this project is that through the engagement of scripture children’s grade-level reading can be improved. To test the effectiveness of this

ministry model project, the researcher studied twelve black students aged six to twelve years, grades first to sixth, from northern Kentucky low-income neighborhoods. Of the twelve students, eight were female and four were male; the students volunteered on a first-come first-serve basis to participate in a Bible-based curriculum research study. “Ready Write Read™” was the theme of this summer reading project, held in the context of Second Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church.

The problem in the writer’s context is that low-income children are not reading at their grade level and are not succeeding academically. This is a problem that is presenting itself nationwide, as research has reported that 80% of children completing the third grade are not reading at their grade level. In addition, the report states that

85 percent of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate. More than 60 percent of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate. Illiteracy and crime are closely related as over 70% of inmates in America’s prisons cannot read above the fourth grade level. Three out of four food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels. Sixteen to nineteen year old girls at the poverty level and below with average skills are six times more likely to have out of wedlock children than their reading counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to provide a model for low-income children in the researcher’s context to improve their grade-level reading through the engagement of scripture. The objective of the project is to expose children to reading methods and other approaches that will help to improve their grade-level reading while they are being read stories from the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup><http://begintoread.com/research/literacystatistics.html> (accessed March 16, 2015).

## Measurement

The measurement of this project will be to describe the implementation and evaluation based only on what the researcher can measure from the participants in the span of this four-week, eighteen-session project. This project is not a longitudinal study, and she is not seeking to claim causation in this short-term task. The objective is to provide an opportunity for the volunteer participants to acquire reading methods and other tools to improve their reading skills.

To measure the participants' progress the curriculum consisted of Bible stories that were read aloud during each session. Also, students wrote a short story that they read to the group; and as an active participant, the writer observed word pronunciation, spelling, use of new words and vocabulary increase, if any. Dialogue was also an important factor to determine improved reading.

The pre- and post-tests will help the researcher to analyze data to determine the effectiveness of the project. Participants will also have an opportunity to share whether reading Bible stories was helpful to improve grade-level reading.

The children were observed to be eager to engage in the Bible story and scripture reading for learning. Based on the questions they asked and the dialogue that generated from among the children, they even realized that Jesus is real and they wanted to experience more of his teaching.

## Data Collection

To refrain from individual bias, the writer collected the data from triangulated sources. Data was accumulated through observation, pre-test and post-test questionnaires, survey questions and testimonials. This data was brought together from parents, teachers,



and participants. Survey data was also collected from caregivers of school-aged children who were not reading at grade level. The data will be utilized to prove or disprove the writer's hypothesis. This data outcome will determine whether the project was successful.

Data was amassed in four stages. Stage one was through the pre-test questionnaire from the teachers, parents, and participants. Stage two data was gathered from teachers from outside of the state of Kentucky. In stage three, data was provided by caregivers of school-aged children. Caregivers were both married and single, and were grandmothers or other relatives and godmothers. Stage four data was collected through the post-test questionnaire from parents and participants, and observation from the researcher and context associate. Participants attended daily reading and writing sessions Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (A detailed schedule of each individual session can be viewed in **Appendix A**).

The writer will describe what she observed in the implementation and evaluate what she can measure in the span of this four-week project. The project model is non-complex; again, it can be replicated for use in the home, church, after school programs, or other organizational settings. The number of hours can be modified to meet the user's personal time requirements.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

The ministry model project, “Reaching Our Children: A Model to Improve Grade Level Reading Among Low Income Children Through the Engagement of Scripture,” began on June 10, 2013 (Monday through Friday) and ended on July 5, 2013. Ninety hours were devoted to this summer camp reading ministry model project to improve grade-level reading among low-income children to prove the hypothesis that young children can improve their grade-level reading through engagement of scripture. The question was asked, “Why scripture rather than newspapers or magazines?” The Scriptures are filled with real accounts of actions that young children can relate to. The children involved were able to enter into the world of their imagination to give them the opportunity to draw from within and make their own choices as to what they wanted to read and write, which increased their interest for continued reading.

The project theme was Ready Write Read™. (The writer has trademarked Ready Write Read™.) The participants referred to the project as the Ready Write Read™ summer reading camp, its primary objective to improve the reading skills of the participants through the engagement of scripture via listening to and reading Bible stories aloud and writing out their understanding for comprehension, as well as writing their own short stories. The program also helped children through vocabulary, pronunciation, social skills, and child friendly entrepreneurship training.

After observing the children the writer documented her observations following each session and considered feedback from the context associate and parents. Twelve children were enrolled in this low-income summer reading camp in the context of the Second Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church. The ages of the children were six to twelve years, and the study group consisted of eight girls and four boys. A couple of children dropped out due to relocating out of the neighborhood, lacking transportation by an adult, or just no longer wanting to attend because they felt the program was boring. This field experience was an exhilarating interactive learning experience for the writer.

A qualitative method was utilized to evaluate the model, and observation from the writer and the context associate was one of the triangulated tools used. While observing the participants reading, the writer and context associate also listened for pronunciation, increased vocabulary, new word usage, and dialogue with peers, staff and other adult volunteers.

### **Implementation of the Project**

The program in its entirety consisted of twenty daily sessions from Monday to Friday and ran over a period of four weeks. The duration of each session was five hours for a total of ninety hours. During weeks one, two and three there were five sessions, totaling twenty-five hours per week. Week four was fifteen hours. Due to personal crisis on July 3, 2013, the session was canceled; also, class was not held on July 4, 2013, so that the researcher and participants could observe a national holiday.

During the four weeks, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same schedule. Wednesday and Friday's schedule was more flexible. On Wednesdays the group walked to the Newport Public Library, spending the day there to access a variety of books and, if needed, use Microsoft Word to type out handwritten stories.

Lunch was delivered to the library free of cost to the students by the Highland Church. The Newport Public Library was accommodating to the writer's requests. The group was allowed to eat in a library group room when available; other times they ate outside and the children were able to run and be playful during this time and at snack time. On Fridays the group participated in local walking field trips. They left on the trip upon arrival of the students and were back to their context for lunch, or they left right after lunch and returned in time for the snack. Brain rest was not enforced on Wednesdays and Fridays; however, if a student expressed a need for time to sit alone, or the researcher or assistant observed such a need, accommodations were made for this rest.

Lack of finances was an issue which created a minor hindrance; however, innovation and improvisation were utilized to provide for effective operation of the project. The Bible was the primary book needed as the model was to use Bible stories to improve grade-level reading. With notice of copyright cited the writer was able to copy up to five hundred verses without permission. A copy of each lesson was distributed to each student. Fundraising and entrepreneurship training was part of the project. All children were required to wear an affirmation t-shirt as a part of the program uniform. Participants attended daily reading and writing sessions, Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (A detailed outline schedule of each individual session can be viewed in **Appendix A.**)

The terms, Ready Write Read™, Brain Rest, WeSearch, and True Bible Accounts were coined by the author to add creativity and variety to the learning process.

Affirmation t-shirts for student learners and adults were worn to give a visual language of what the students were seeing and hearing about themselves.

The first day of the program was spent in orientation. This was a time to meet and greet, and the purpose of the program was explained. A pre-test was given to help the writer with data analyses at the end of the project. The terms the writer coined were defined for the students' understanding. Group rules were established by the writer and the students, and posted on the wall next to the poem written by Dorothy Law Nolte, *Children Learn What They Live*, see (**APPENDIX F**). When the group became somewhat unmanageable, the writer said "Freeze" and directed everyone's attention to the group rules and the poem. With smiles and apologies everyone resumed the order of the agenda.

Every day was an adventure! Great positive energy and anticipation flowed from the children. They wanted nothing but to please the writer, and the writer wanted more than anything to provide the proper teaching and to observe improvement in the children's reading level. That would be the win-win situation she desired and anticipated. The daily adventures consisted of Bible story reading; walking field trips; "WeSearch" at the Newport, Kentucky, public library; drama practice for a group skit (the group choreographed a video to the Ready Write Read™ music); basic entrepreneurship training to plan fundraisers; and discussing how much would be needed for back to school supplies and clothes. Story telling appeared to be the time the children most enjoyed. After the story they had an opportunity to write funny narratives, naming their characters. Some wrote tales that depicted their life struggle; however, they opted for a happy ending.

The writer gives special thanks to the Newport Public Library staff who accommodated the group needs on Wednesdays, providing a conference room with television, white board and supplies, and a separate room when available for the students to eat lunch inside, as some days were very hot. Simultaneously the library was facilitating their annual summer reading program, and the children in the study group were able to participate in the reading for prizes and other drawings.

The methodology was action research whereby the researcher was an active participant and observer. A qualitative approach was utilized, whereby the writer described in text what happened. To read more of the writer's observations and those of other adults involved, see (**Appendix D**).

While reading improvement was primary, followed by writing and comprehension, the researcher considered it to be of vital importance to teach the children truth about the Bible they were reading. She discussed fantasy versus their real reality. These low-income children live in a reality that is impacted by the environment in which they live and the people who influence them. The writer felt it of a dire nature to take time to train the children on the difference between fairy tales and truth. The book *Little Red Riding Hood: How to Write Your Own Fairy Tale* captivated the children's minds; they gave the writer their total attention as she read.

When the sessions began participants did not want to read. The researcher called on a few students, but none were pressured to read, only to participate. Within three to four sessions the students were raising their hands in anticipation to read. This was exciting for the writer because the primary measurement to determine if students were

improving their reading was through their oral reading. Observation of dialogue when in groups also helped with this measurement.

Below is a brief description of each session. All twenty sessions are in

**APPENDIX A**, and all eight Bible lessons are in **APPENDIX E**.

Session 1: June 10, 2013  
Pretest (**APPENDIX B**)  
Entrepreneurship training

Session 2: June 11, 2013  
Bible Lesson I: God's Love, Genesis pp. 2-3, Exodus pp. 66-67, John pp.1238-1239

Session 3: June 12, 2013  
Library/"We Search"

Session 4: June 13, 2013  
Bible Lesson I: God's Love, Genesis pp. 2-3, Exodus pp. 66-67, John pp.1238-1239

Session 5: June 14, 2013  
Walking field trip and skit writing

Session 6: June 17, 2013  
Entrepreneurship training

Session 7: June 18, 2013  
Bible Lesson II: Hearing the voice of God, 1 Samuel p. 318

Session 8: June 19, 2013  
Library/"We Search"

Session 9: June 20, 2013  
Bible Lesson II: Hearing the voice of God, 1 Samuel p. 318

Session 10: June 21, 2013  
Walking field trip and skit writing  
Newport to Cincinnati via the Purple People Bridge

Session 11: June 24, 2013  
Entrepreneurship training

Session 12: June 25, 2013

Bible Lesson III: Faith, 2 Timothy pp. 1406-1409

Session 13: June 26, 2013  
Library/"We Search"

Session 14: June 27, 2013  
Bible Lesson III: Faith, 2 Timothy pp. 1406-1409

Session 15: June 28, 2013  
Walking field trip

Session 16: July 1, 2013  
Entrepreneurship training

Session 17: July 2, 2013  
Bible Lesson IV: Jonah pp. 1072-1073

Session 18: July 3, 2013 (canceled)

Session 19: July 4, 2013 (holiday)

Session 20: July 5, 2013  
Bible Lesson IV: Jonah pp. 1072-1073  
Skit writing and acting  
Post-test (**APPENDICES B-C**)

Fulfilling the needs of the students, and assuring they were engaging through the scripture, the group was able to complete only four of the eight Bible Lessons.

Throughout the program two children's Bibles were used: *The Children's Adventure Bible* (NIRV) New International Reader's Version, published by Zondervan, and Kids Bible.com, and *New Century Version*, published by Thomas Nelson. The NIRV was the Bible used for all Bible lessons. Copyright allowed the use of up to 500 verses. Verses were needed for the four-week session and would be needed for the eight-week session.

### **Collection of Data**

The writer triangulated three sources of data, utilizing pre- and post-tests, questionnaires and a survey, and observation to investigate a phenomenon of illiteracy



among elementary children. The writer will describe the implementation and evaluation of the model. This model can also be utilized in Sunday school, after school programs, the home, and other contexts where school-age children are involved. The non-directional hypothesis of this project is that through the engagement of scripture children's grade-level reading can be improved.

### **Data Analysis**

This project was a qualitative study. Based on answers given to a set of five pre-test questions 100% of the participants wanted to improve their reading. Seven of the twelve participants completed the program. The post-test suggests that 58% of the participants showed a measure of improvement in their reading.

Self-esteem was not measured, although participants' confidence appeared to be higher at the end of the project. Data from the pre-test questions from teachers suggests 66.33% agreed and 33.33% strongly agreed. Data from the caregivers suggested that 94% of those surveyed felt the children could learn to read using Bible stories. Data from the teachers surveyed suggests that 100% of those surveyed felt children could learn to read using Bible stories.

### **Outcome**

The results of the model suggested that the project was successful. The collected data implied that the participants who remained in the program (seven children completed the program) were successful and improved in their reading. The data indicated that there was improvement in vocabulary increase, word pronunciation and writing skills. Reading Bible accounts and other stories aloud also demonstrated an increase in the students' self-esteem and in eagerness to want to know more about Jesus. The program was intended to

run for eight weeks; however, due to a catastrophic crisis the writer had to cancel the program at the end of four weeks.

On Friday, July 5, 2013, the researcher met with the group at the context to tell them that this would be the last day of the summer reading camp program. In her heart she knew that the program had been a success. She was able to prove her hypothesis, that through the engagement of scripture children can improve their grade-level reading; and that they did. Not only did they improve their reading skills, but there was a remarkable observable improvement in the students' attitude and behavior. Although it was a day of victory and triumph, it was also a day of sadness because the researcher knew that on Monday, the beginning of the next week, the children would go back to living life in a manner that would be a struggle. The lunch program the children enjoyed for nourishment and a time of social interaction and play would not be available. As the writer is reminded of the bond she developed with the children, she is hopeful that they will remember the nurture and care. Ellen wrote,

If a child grows up hearing positive words of confidence, encouragement, and blessing from a parent, those words will stick when the child begins to have those inevitable questions about his or her worth during adolescence. The opposite is also true. If children grow up hearing negative words of criticism, nagging, and sarcasm from a parent, those words will also stick—sometimes for the rest of their lives. The way we reflect on who our children are now and who we think they will become has more impact on them than we probably realize. Gary Smalley and John Trent writes, “When it comes to predictions about their future, children are literalist—particularly when they hear predictions from their parents, the most important people from an earthly perspective in their lives.” (Used with author's permission).<sup>1</sup>

Although the ending was sudden, the writer prays that the time of learning and adventure will forever be imprinted on the children's hearts.

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen, Banks Elwell, *The One Year Devotion For Moms* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publisher, Inc. 2005). Devotion dated April 23, 2015.

Parental involvement was a vital component that was missing in this project.

Parents do not understand that the success and/or failure of their child is dependent on their participation in the child's life. This would be a recommendation for further study.

The project model is non-complex; it can be replicated for use in the home, church, after school or other organizational settings. The number of hours can be modified to meet the user's personal time requirements.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION**

This ministry model project, “Reaching Our Children: A Model to Improve Grade Level Reading Among Low Income Children Through Engagement of Scripture,” took place at the Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church located in the city of Newport, Kentucky, a low-income school district. In developing the project the writer was challenged by several life experiences to use as a model. These life experiences were teen pregnancy, dysfunctional relationships, childhood abandonment, and many others. She chose to focus on improving the reading skills of children because this holds a special place in her heart.

The idea of working with school-age children emerged through the writing of the author's spiritual autobiography and her eight-year-old granddaughter's silent struggle with illiteracy. Looking forward, under the present circumstances, the author can see a future generation of grandchildren like her six-year-old grandson who displayed signs of agitation with school only after a few weeks in kindergarten. She had forgotten her own repressed childhood. She never read at a proper grade level; and having no adult supervision throughout her entire school years, she continued the educational process to the point of graduating at the minimal required level. However, unbeknownst to her, an inner drive propelled her forward throughout every hardship she encountered.

The author worked with children professionally over the course of twenty years; however, the major part of her vocation has been with the adult population. She received the most joy, however, when ministering to children, even though she felt she had to work with adults in order that they could reach their own children. Over time she discovered that some parents are unable to educate their children due to their own lack of education. Therefore, they need help from others, such as the author.

Reflecting back on the project, the author can utilize several words to describe her overall experience; she was overwhelmed, excited, and motivated. She discovered that within her context many of the children had poor reading skills, and they were not comfortable reading or participating in activities wherein reading was a component of the agenda. However, when they engaged in the reading of the Scriptures, the students were able to use their imagination and “what-if magical thinking” to make the stories more interesting. Faith in God, who orchestrated this process, and perseverance till the end paid off. Within two to three sessions the children were raising their hands in anticipation.

The main objective of this project was to integrate Bible stories with literacy to test the author's hypothesis. Again, reading her spiritual autobiography allowed her the ability to assess and reflect back on her childhood and see the benefit of a spiritual role model. The writer believes that neighborhood churches have a moral obligation to provide service in the community in which they are located. The researcher found it amazing how the students emulated the facilitators and followed the rules. Here she saw her own stereotypes rising to the surface, as she expected children from low-income communities to be untamed. She truly enjoyed being a participant in this project. The children welcomed her into their world; and through reading aloud, writing short stories

and dialogue, they shared with her their life stories, without telling her outright that the stories they wrote were about themselves. In return, she respected their information and did not criticize or judge them or their living situation. In addition, she developed a bond with each student from the beginning. The time they shared was precious, and the author did not want it to end.

Due to a personal catastrophic crisis on July 3, 2013, the researcher was unable to continue the program. This crisis was good for the students because it helped them to understand life's calamities and cancellations. Even though July 4, 2013, was an Independence Day holiday and the group had planned to meet on July 5, the researcher had to announce to the participants that the program was ending. The cancellation announcement provided unexpected results. Neighborhood children not having been registered showed up that day. They did not know the program was ending, as the big banner that hung outside the church building stated that four more weeks of the program remained.

The author often thinks of her "student learners" and wonders whether they are applying what they learned during their short time at the Ready Write Read™ summer reading camp. Life is full of stories. On one of their walking field trips the group, along with one parent volunteer, walked from Newport, Kentucky, to Cincinnati, Ohio, via the "Purple People Bridge." On this walk the students freely dialogued among themselves about the surrounding environment and the content of the reading classes. Their interaction demonstrated that their reading skills were improving. While reading Bible stories and scripture is a tool that can be utilized to improve grade reading, numerous methods are constantly being developed and designed. It is the writer's observation and

belief that reading Bible stories and the Scriptures has a quality that the other models do not offer: consistency and the foundation to teach productive citizenship and a healthy lifestyle.

This project endured many challenges, including: lack of parental involvement, the inability to get male children to stay engaged in the program, poor community involvement in the program, lack of school and church support, lack of business and other organizational involvement, and the inclusion of diverse ethnic groups to include Hispanics. It was the author's intention to make this type of program an integral part of every low-income neighborhood in contrast to that of liquor stores and game rooms. The writer believes children would participate and therefore could be given an opportunity to improve their grade-level reading. However, she understands that everyone will not be excited about this opportunity for children.

What would the writer do differently? Plans would be made to have more people in the community commit to work with the children so that if a crisis of any nature were to arise, the group could continue. She would collect data from more sources and would involve the business community for finances, the church community for volunteerism and support, and other organizations for supplies and feedback. Parents and caregivers would be instructed as to what they could do at home to help their children.

At times during the implementation of her project the author was unsure as to what she was doing, yet she knew she had to complete her task; this kept her at a high stress level. The seminary did not provide the support expected. For many months, eighteen months to be exact, her project was all over the place. After three focus groups

and numerous fresh starts, she was finally able to put her document in writing with outside assistance.

### Summary

Throughout this document the writer has conveyed that lack of grade-level reading is a major issue among low-income children. A model to improve grade-level reading through the engagement of the Scriptures was designed to help millions of children across the nation. The writer initially designed an eight-week summer reading program; however, due to a personal catastrophe the program had to be dissolved at the end of four weeks.

The theological theme for this paper is transformation. When children learn to read on grade level they also learn to think and make better choices. Every day of the author's project was an adventure. The children were always present by the time the researcher arrived; and they eagerly participated in Bible reading, storytelling and writing, "WeSearch," local walking field trips, and more.

Uniforms consisted of a t-shirt with affirmation language to project a good self-image of the student. The Ready Write Read™ t-shirt for student learners read, "I see success in my future." The adult t-shirt read, "I see success in their future."

Two needs for this project were lacking. One was fundraising and the other was volunteerism.

Fundraising was an important component of the summer reading program that was needed to meet the budget (rent, Bibles, t-shirts and other supplies). The writer paid for approximately 90% of the related costs out of pocket. A basic entrepreneurship education and skills session was taught on Mondays. The children learned how to set



small goals regarding ways to obtain money legally for personal needs and other financial obligations. They wrote out a wish list to raise funds for back to school supplies and clothes.

Volunteerism was an important, but missing, component of the program. The children were eager to learn; as stated in the author's research, "Children are wired to read." However, only two volunteers were present throughout the twenty sessions, which provided less one to one time to work with students to help foster their writing. Finally, due to a personal catastrophic crisis on July 3, 2013, the author was unable to continue the program. It had to end because nobody was available to continue the project.

### Conclusion

The data suggests that the Ready Write Read™ summer reading program outcome was a success. Prepared or not, as time evolves children of today will take the lead in the future. Throughout the project's sessions affirmations were continually used to remind the student learners that they are the future leaders. These affirmations were helpful. The writer observed great respect, sharing, discipline and willingness to learn among the children. She learned from the children as they learned from her. This was evident when the children worked in a group and wrote a skit about dropouts and bullying. The content of their writing conveyed that they were not merely listening, but comprehending and giving a voice to what they heard and witnessed.

In order to have a realistic strategic plan to help students raise their grade-level reading, a collaborative effort by the stakeholders in the neighborhood would have to be advanced. This task of helping children read on grade level can take place only on a small scale. The expectation that the Board of Education, the school district, or the school

system will meet the needs of a problem of such longevity, magnitude and controversy is unrealistic. The program No Child Left Behind was adopted in 2004, stating that by 2014 children would be reading at grade level. However, statistics report that in 2015, 80% of low-income children are not reading at grade level. There is a saying, "How do you eat an elephant?" The response is, "One bite at a time." This metaphor relates to improving grade-level reading among low-income children. Although these children are at a disadvantage, their reading can be improved, and, with the proper support systems, these students can excel to grade level and above. This concept of systems will be a vital key and is recommended for an individual future study. The writer briefly expounds on systems in the theological section of her paper.

This reading program changed the writer to become more of a devoted and consistent child advocate and activist to bring awareness to school-age literacy. The writer's ministry model has evolved into a pilot program. Her project has become an even more passionate segment of the her life's work. The writer's goal is to continue with the Ready Write Read™ sessions after school and during all school breaks throughout the year. This year, 2015, the writer will implement the third annual Ready Write Read™ summer reading camp. She will operate as a business owner to train volunteers, teach parents and caregivers, and empower other stakeholders to come on board and invest in the future of children. The writer's personal goal for school-age children is that they thrive in a land that has the educational nourishment they need. Just as each citizen needs a Social Security card and a birth certificate, the writer would like to see each child have his or her own personal Bible; even if four siblings are registered in the program, each individual child needs his or her own Bible. The Bible will be the children's primary tool

to set a consistent standard for productive citizenship and a healthy lifestyle, as it speaks a consistent message to all readers.

Even if the teaching controversy continues for the next fifty years with the present education systems and their best practices for teaching low-income children to read, there is no further excuse for the high percentage of children not reading on grade level, understanding several factors:

- Children are wired to learn to read
- Parents are the first teachers
- The church has a role in this social issue
- A united community can provide this human service

The community, collectively as a “village,” has a responsibility to raise up leaders for the nation, not a generation of illiterate adults. The writer has described how parents can take a proactive stance to teach their children, how the lay community can become involved, and how the church body can step up and get involved by opening up their facilities as educational institutions and basic literacy tutoring centers at no charge to the community.

All of the research in this document brought new awareness to the writer.

However, in the historical foundation of this paper she expressed that she was truly inspired by Robert Raikes’ simple model for children to read, his philanthropy to help and not wait for somebody else to do the work, and Marva Collins’ hope and optimism that low-income children who are not reading at grade level can achieve their dreams. The author is thankful for the voice of Rudolf Flesch, who wrote books to confirm that all children, if taught properly, can learn to read by the age of seven. Therefore, grade-level

reading among low-income students should not be the silent national crisis that it is today!

The researcher is motivated by the newfound answers that arose from her spiritual autobiography leading her to explore why her businesses never prospered. She can see the transformation taking root and old concepts being made new and whole for her and the millions of low-income children who will one day proudly pick up a book and read without the stigma of shame.

When she read the book *The E Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It*, the words of Michael E. Gerber resonated in the author's spirit as they appeared to jump off the pages and into her brain for perfect understanding. Twenty years ago, she read Ray Kroc's biography, *Grinding It Out: The Making of McDonald's*, and was inspired by how Ray Kroc wanted a milkshake machine in every McDonald's. That was before he ever dreamed he would own McDonald's. This reflection speaks to the author's model, as she wants every child to have a Bible to read. This desire was present before she ever dreamed she could open learning academies across the nation.

Gerber credits Ray Kroc for creating the model upon which an entire generation of entrepreneurs have since built their fortune—a model that was the genesis of the franchise phenomenon.”<sup>1</sup> Gerber stated, “Think of your business as anything but a job! Go to work on your business rather than in it. Ask yourself the following questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael E. Gerber, *The E Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 1995), 81.

How can I get my business to work, but without me? How can I get my people to work, but without my constant interference?"<sup>2</sup>

This concept of systems will be a vital key to children's reading at grade level within the next year. Gerber continues his questions, the author personalized the questions and asked? How can the author systematize her business in such a way that it could be replicated 5,000 times, so the 5,000<sup>th</sup> unit would run as smoothly as the first? She is inspired to believe that, just as Ray Kroc did it, she too can replicate her model to improve grade-level reading. Continuing to personalize Gerber questions, she asked, how can she own her business, and still be free of it? How can she spend her time doing the work she loves to do rather than the work she has to do? She can do this by teaching children not just to live but to enjoy life, and expect the elders in the community to impart wisdom into their inner being.

Ray Kroc's model speaks to the researcher's model to improve grade-level reading among low-income children through the engagement of scripture. The author will continue to build on her ministry model and other reading models to ensure that school-age children can have an opportunity to succeed in life, become productive members of society, and lead the nation. Utilizing the concepts of Ray Kroc's model, the author will continue to design her model, a model that can be replicated and bring great results to children. Although low-income children, their families and communities are at a disadvantage presently, the children's reading will improve and they will prosper!

In closing, the author wishes to express her gratitude for the Holy Spirit's leading in her life. She does not get it right every time, but when she listens and chooses to act in

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

obedience the outcome is positively to her advantage. It was vital that she follow the spiritual lead of God and not that of man. She is able to see this from her spiritual autobiography. She can also see how pleasing people and listening to man could have sent her wandering for the rest of her life's journey.

When the writer gathered several members of her family to share with them her plan to resign from her current professional employment to establish a summer reading program so that children could improve their grade-level reading, she received enough negative feedback to make her think she should just throw out the concept. Her family, whom she felt would support her endeavor, made reference to the fact that she was not being logical, although they stated they might involve their children in such a program, or even donate money to offset the cost of the overhead to maintain such a program during the summer. Therefore, the writer was indirectly encouraged by her family to let somebody else take the risk and do it, and that was the only time they discussed the concept of improving grade-level reading and the writer's starting a small business. The author is glad that she was able to look objectively at her family's comments and make the right decision for herself. If her family was right, and the program she envisioned was worthwhile, then it was up to her to make it happen.

The writer would like to conclude with a poem that was given to the students in her master's class by the professor. This was the first class and it contained many non-traditional older students. The author is sure the professor was aware of the anxiety and lack of confidence that some of the grad students were feeling, and the writer was instantly encouraged by reading the poem. She made several copies, placing one in her class folder and taping one on the wall in her prayer closet and one on the refrigerator, to

remind her that times might come when she felt that she could not complete the class assignment, but it could be done and she would be the one to do it. This poem definitely relates to her accomplishment of completing her ministry model project on July 5, 2013, a project that can be replicated at home and in after school programs, church, and other organizations for youth. The hours can be modified as needed. Children are wired to learn to read. This poem (**can be viewed in APPENDIX F**) relates to the writer's plans to hold annual summer reading programs and the start of her new reading business to develop learning academies across America.

## **APPENDIX A**



## APPENDIX A

### SESSIONS 1-20 DETAILED OUTLINE SCHEDULE

#### **Session 1** Monday, June 10, 2013

10:00 – 11:00 AM Orientation and open discussion

11:00 – 11:45 AM Bible story

11:45 – 12:00 PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce their learning.

2:00-2:15 PM

2:15-2:30 PM Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, question and answer, scripture homework and closure.

It was important to get the student learners to be still, which helped with managing the group; brain rest was helpful as it compelled the to rest from their busy day.

Session One schedule was altered due this being the first session. Children were given an opportunity to meet and greet other participates.

#### **Sessions 1**

The group was called at attention, the facilitator gave a brief overview of the program and the day's agenda. Each participate filled out a short five question pre-test questionnaire survey

Scriptural lessons was Creation/Salvation/God's Love . Each session was facilitated by the researcher, and/or the context associate in an interactive style. Facilitator shared the theme of the Bible story in her own words. Children were given a copy of the Bible story

and encouraged to follow along with the reader. Children volunteered to read the Bible account. Student participation was encouraged on a daily basis as the researcher was aware that students have different learning styles and many were not reading on grade level. Reading aloud helped to assess the student's reading ability. Afternoon reinforcement was discussed in a life application style, students participated in dialogue and writing skit to reinforce the story.

## Session 2

Tuesday June 11, 2013

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

Scriptural lessons was from 10:30AM – 11:30AM, and 1:00-200 PM, a total of two hours per session. Each session was facilitated by the researcher, and/or the context associate in an interactive style. Children volunteered to read the Bible account. Student participation was encouraged on a daily basis as the researcher was aware that students have different learning styles and many were not reading on grade level. Reading aloud helped to assess the student's reading ability.

### Session 3

Wednesday, June 12, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

#### Session 4

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Thursday June 13, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

Session 5

Friday June 14, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 6

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Monday June 17, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 7

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Tuesday June 18, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.



## Session 8

Wednesday June 19, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 9

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Thursday June 20, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 10

Friday June 21, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 11

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Monday June 24, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 12

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Tuesday June 25, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

### Session 13

Wednesday June 26, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 14

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Thursday June 27, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 15

Friday June 28, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.



## Session 16

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Monday July 1, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 17

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Tuesday July 2, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

Session 18 (Cancelled)

Wednesday July 3, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM

10:00 – 10:30 AM

10:30 – 11:30 AM

11:30 -11:45 AM

11:45 – 12:00PM

12:00 – 12:30 PM

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM

1:00-2:00 PM

2:00-2:15 PM

2:15-2:30

2:30-3:00 PM

Session 19 (Holiday)

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday followed the same scheduled

Thursday July 4, 2013

**National Holiday, no group was held;** however the schedule for Thursday July 4, 2013 was be held on Friday July 5, 2013

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## Session 20

Friday July 5, 2013

Due to the catastrophic crisis on July 3, 2013, the project was discontinued, this was the last day the group would meet.

10:00 – 10:15 AM Meet and Greet, Rules, Attendance

10:00 – 10:30 AM Review /Preview and open discussion

10:30 – 11:30 AM Bible story

11:30 -11:45 AM Dialogue transition time

11:45 – 12:00PM Brain Rest

12:00 – 12:30 PM Lunch/Socialization

12:30-12:45 PM

12:45-1:00 PM Group set and/or preparation

1:00-2:00 PM Reinforce our morning scripture lesson, spend time reading and writing a skit to reinforce today's learning.

2:00-2:15 PM Dialogue transition time

2:15-2:30 Brain Rest

2:30-3:00 PM Afternoon Snack, questions and answers, scripture homework and closure.

## **APPENDIX B**

## APPENDIX B

### PRE AND POST QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS

#### Pre- Questionnaire for children

1. Have you ever read the Bible?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Eight    Yes

Four    No

2. Would you like to improve your grade level reading?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Twelve    Yes

3. How many Bible stories do you know?

a. Yes (more than one)    b. No (none)    c. No Response

Three    Yes more than three

Nine    No (none)

4. Do you find the stories in the Bible exciting?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Two    Yes

Ten    No |Response

5. Are you willing to read the Bible to improve your ability to learn?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Twelve    Yes

Expounding on the questions

The reason these questions were asked...

1. If a child cannot read this project may not be effective for them.

2. This question was asked to acquire if the children thought reading may be problematic.
3. Wanted to know if children were familiar with Bible accounts.
4. Assessing the children's interest in the Bible, if any.
5. Are children willing to read the Bible to improve reading?

### **Post- Questionnaire for children**

1. Did your reading improve after the session?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Response

Seven    Yes

2. How many Bible stories do you know?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Four    Yes    Two

Three    Yes    Three

3. Did you find the stories in the Bible exciting?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Seven    Yes

4. Do you read better than before?

a. Yes    b. No    c. No Response

Seven    Yes

### **Pre-test Questionnaire for Parents**

Do you think your child's reading skills need improvement?

1. Agree    2. Strongly Agree    3. Disagree    4. Strongly Disagree

Twelve responses:

Five strongly agree



Seven agree

**Post Questionnaire for Parents**

Have your child's reading skills improved after completing the summer session using scripture as the medium?

1. Agree      2. Strongly Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly Disagree

Three strongly agree

Four agree

## **APPENDIX C**

## APPENDIX C

### PRE TEST QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

#### TEACHERS/PARENTS SURVEY

##### **Pre – Test Questionnaire Teachers**

Three teachers were asked the following questions prior to the summer reading camp in the context of the Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church in Newport, Kentucky.

Do you think the children in your class reading level need to be improved?

1. Agree      2. Strongly Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly Disagree

Three strongly agreed

Do you think a child's reading skills can improve through the reading of Bible-based stories?

1. Agree      2. Strongly Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly Disagree

Two agreed

One strongly agreed

The teachers were not asked a post question because they were not a part of the summer reading program. This project was not a longitudinal study and the writer is not seeking to claim causation in this short term project. In this qualitative research approach the writer will only measure what was implemented during the span of the four week/twenty session project.

##### **Teachers Survey**

In addition, five teachers from Texas and Illinois were surveyed and asked the following questions.

Do you think a child's reading skills can improve through the reading of Bible-based stories?

1. Agree      2. Strongly Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly Disagree

One strongly agreed

Four agreed

The conclusion and the findings will be documented in chapter five.

### **Parental Survey**

Do you think the use of Bible stories can enhance your child's reading skills?

1. Agree      2. Strongly Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly Disagree

In addition, data was collected from fifteen care givers of elementary school age children.

Ten agreed

Four strongly agreed

One disagreed

## **APPENDIX D**

After observing the children the writer documented her observations following each session and considered feedback from the context associate and parents. Twelve children were enrolled in this low-income summer reading camp in the context of the Second Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church. The ages of the children were six to twelve years, and the study group consisted of eight girls and four boys. A couple of children dropped out due to relocating out of the neighborhood, lacking transportation by an adult, or just no longer wanting to attend because they felt the program was boring.

When the sessions began participants did not want to read. The researcher called on a few students, but none were pressured to read, only to participate. Within three to four sessions the students were raising their hands in anticipation to read. This was exciting for the writer because the primary measurement to determine if students were improving their reading was through their oral reading. Observation of dialogue when in groups also helped with this measurement.

Life is full of stories. On one of their walking field trips the group, along with one parent volunteer, walked from Newport, Kentucky, to Cincinnati, Ohio, via the "Purple People Bridge." On this walk the students freely dialogued among themselves about the surrounding environment and the content of the reading classes. Their interaction demonstrated that their reading skills were improving.

In the writer's heart she knew that the program had been a success. She was able to prove her hypothesis, that through the engagement of scripture children can improve their grade-level reading; and that they did. Not only did they improve their reading skills, but there was a remarkable observable improvement in the students' attitude and behavior.

## **APPENDIX E**

## APPENDIX E

### EIGHT BIBLE LESSONS

I GOD'S LOVE/SALVATION	Israelites
II LISTENING	Samuel
III FAITH	Timothy
IV OBEDIENCE	Jonah
V CHOICES	Nicodemus
VI FORGIVING	Prodigal Son
VII CHILDREN'S ROLE	Eli and his two sons
VIII RESPONSIBILITY	King Joash & King Josiah

Jesus and eternal life was discussed in every lesson. The writer spent additional time to discuss with the children a brief concrete summary of the history of the Bible. This teaching was imperative to help the children understand that the Bible accounts were not stories like fairy tales, but true Biblical accounts of the life of real people in ancient times. By the end of the program several children had faith to believe Jesus was real and there was an observation that there was a fear of the Lord they exhibited. Several students wanted to know more about how to hear God's voice, how to pray and how to be born again.

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Bible Lesson I: GOD'S LOVE/SALVATION

Israelites

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## Genesis 1

## The Beginning

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth didn't have any shape. And it was empty. Darkness was over the surface of the ocean. At that time, the ocean covered the earth. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good. He separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day." He called the darkness "night." There was evening, and there was morning. It was day one.

6 God said, "Let there be a huge space between the waters. Let it separate water from water." And that's exactly what happened. God made the huge space between the waters. He separated the water that was under the space from the water that was above it. 8 God called the huge space "sky." There was evening, and there was morning. It was day two.

9 God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place. Let dry ground appear." And that's exactly what happened. 10 God called the dry ground "land." He called the waters that were gathered together "oceans." And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, "Let the land produce plants. Let them bear their own seeds. And let there be trees on the land that bear fruit with seeds in it. Let each kind of plant or tree have its own kind of seeds." And that's exactly what happened.

12 The land produced plants. Each kind of plant had its own kind of seeds. The land produced trees that bore fruit

## Did You Know?

**What does create mean?**  
1:1 The word create means to make something new.  
Genesis tells us that God is the creator of all things. You can find many things that God created in Genesis 1.



with seeds in it. Each kind of tree had its own kind of seeds.

God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning. It was day three.

14 God said, "Let there be lights in the huge space of the sky. Let them separate the day from the night. Let them serve as signs to mark off the seasons and the days and the years. Let them serve as lights in the huge space of the sky to give light on the earth." And that's exactly what happened.

15 God made two great lights. He made the larger light to rule over the day. He made the smaller light to rule over the night. He also made the stars.

16 God put the lights in the huge space of the sky to give light on the earth. 18 He put them there to rule over the day and the night. He put them there to separate light from darkness.

God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning. It was day four.

20 God said, "Let the waters be filled with living things. Let birds fly above the earth across the huge space of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the ocean. He created every living and moving thing that fills the waters. He created all kinds of them. He created every kind of bird that flies. And God saw that it was good.

22 God blessed them. He said, "Have little ones and increase your numbers. Fill the water in the oceans. Let there be more and more birds on the earth."

23 There was evening, and there was morning. It was day five.

24 God said, "Let the land produce all kinds

of living creatures. Let there be livestock, and creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals. Let there be all kinds of them." And that's exactly what happened.

25 God made all kinds of wild animals. He made all kinds of livestock. He made all kinds of creatures that move along the ground. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our likeness. Let them rule over the fish in the waters and the birds of the air. Let them rule over the livestock and over the whole earth. Let them rule over all of the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created man in his own likeness. He created him in the likeness of God.

He created them as male and female.

28 God blessed them. He said to them, "Have children and increase your numbers. Fill the earth and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the waters and the birds of the air. Rule over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I am giving you every plant on the face of the whole earth that bears its own seeds. I am giving you every tree that has fruit with seeds in it. All of them will be given to you for food.

30 I am giving every green plant to all of the land animals and the birds of the air for food. I am also giving the plants to all of the creatures that move on the ground. I am giving them to

## Genesis 1-2

3

every living thing that breathes." And that's exactly what happened.

31 God saw everything he had made. And it was very good. There was evening, and there was morning. It was day six.

So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed.

23 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing. So on the seventh day he rested from all of his work. 24 God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. He rested on it. After he had created everything, he rested from all of the work he had done.

## Adam and Eve

4 How is the story of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

The Lord God made the earth and the heavens. 5 At that time, bushes had not appeared on the earth. Plants had not come up in the fields. The Lord God had not sent rain on the earth. And there wasn't any man to work the ground. 6 So God created man from the earth. They were the whole surface of the ground.

7 Then the Lord God formed a man. He made him out of the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into him. And the man became a living person.

8 The Lord God had planted a garden in the east. It was in Eden. There he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. Their fruit was pleasing to look at and good to eat.

The tree that gives life forever was in the middle of the garden. The tree that

## You're Special

Read Genesis 1:26-27. God made us in his own image. We are God's very special creation.

Look at pictures of your family or read when they were children. How were they like you? How were they different? Your parents love you very much because you are their child. You are like them in important ways. Ask your mom or dad to tell you why they think you are special.

God made you in his image too. You are special to God. He loves you. Write a message to God to thank him for loving you.



Genesis 1:26-27

## Words to Treasure

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.





Bible Lesson II: LISTENING

Samuel

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1 Samuel 2

## Did You Know?

**What was Eli's sin?**  
2:12 Eli was a high priest. His sons were priest too. Eli let his sons do evil things. This chapter tells what happened to Eli for letting his sons sin. It also tells what would happen to Eli's sons.



17 Then Eliab went home to Kanaan, but the boy Samuel served the Lord under the direction of the priest Eli.

### Eli's Evil Sons

13 Eli's sons were evil men. They didn't know the Lord. 14 When anyone came to offer a sacrifice, here is what the priests would do. While the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a large fork in his hand. 15 He would stick it into the pot or pot or small or large kettle. Then the priest would take for himself everything the fork brought up. That's how Eli's sons treated all of the people of Israel who came to Shiloh.

16 Even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come over. He would speak to the man who was offering the sacrifice. He would say, "Give the priest some meat to cook. He won't accept boiled meat from you. All he'll accept is raw meat."

17 Sometimes the man would say to him, "Let the fat be burned up first. Then take what you want."

18 But the servant would answer, "No. Hand it over right now. If you don't, I'll take it away from you by force."

19 That's how Eli's sons were very great in the Lord's sight. That's because they were making fun of his offering.

20 But the boy Samuel served the Lord. He was a sacred little boy. 21 Each year his mother made him a little robe. She took it to him when she went up to Shiloh with her husband. She did it when her husband went to offer the yearly sacrifice. 22 Eli would bless Elishah and his wife. He would say, "May the Lord give you children by this woman. May they take the

place of the boy who stayed for and gave to him." Then they would go home.

23 The Lord was gracious to Hannah. She became pregnant. Over a period of years she had three more sons and two daughters. During that whole time the boy Samuel grew up serving the Lord.

24 Eli was very old. He kept hearing about everything his sons were doing to all of the people of Israel. He also heard how they were having sex with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

25 So Eli said to his sons, "Why are you doing those things? All of the people are telling me about the evil things you are doing. Why, my sons. The report I hear isn't good. And it's spreading among the Lord's people. 26 If a man sins against someone else, God can help that sinner. But if a man sins against the Lord, who can help him?"

### A Sign of God's Prophecies

27 A man of God came to Eli. He told him, "The Lord says, 'I made myself clearly known to your relatives who lived long ago. I did it when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh. 28 I chose your father Aaron to be my priest. I chose him out of all of the tribes of Israel. I told him to go up to my altar. I told him to burn incense. I chose him to wear a linen ephod when he served me. I also gave him upon all of the offerings that are made with fire by the people of Israel.'"

29 "Why do all of you laugh at my sacrifices and offerings? I require them to be brought to the house where I live. Why do you honor your sons more than me? Why do you fatten yourselves on the best parts of every offering that is made by my people Israel?"

30 "The Lord is the God of Israel. He announced, 'I promised that your family and the family of Aaron would serve me as priests forever.' But now the Lord announces, 'I will not let that happen! I will honor those who

honor me. But I will turn away from those who look down on me.' 31 The time is coming when I will cut your line short. I will also cut short the lives of those in your family. No man in your family line will grow old. 32 'You will see nothing but trouble in the house where I live. Good things will still happen to Israel. But no man in your family line will ever grow old. 33 I remember your family will serve me at my altar. But your heart will be sad. And the rest of the men in your family line will die while they are still young.'"

34 "Something is going to happen to your two sons. Hophni and Phinehas. When it does, it will show you that what I am saying is true. They will both die on the same day. 35 'I will raise up for myself a faithful priest. He will do what my heart and mind want him to do. I will make his family line very secure.' They will always serve as priests to my anointed king. 36 Everyone who is left in your family line will come and bow down to him. They will bring him a piece of silver and a crust of bread. They will say, 'Please give me a place to serve among the priests. Then I can have food to eat.'"

### The Lord Calls Out to Samuel

37 The boy Samuel served the Lord under the direction of Eli. In those days the Lord didn't give many messages to the people. He didn't give them many visions.

38 One night Eli was lying down in his usual place. His eyes were becoming so weak he couldn't see very well. Samuel was lying down in the Lord's house. That's where the ark of God was kept. The lamp

1 Samuel 2-3

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of God was still burning. 1 The Lord called out to Samuel.

2 Samuel answered, "Here I am." 3 He ran over to Eli. He said, "Here I am. You called out to me." 4 But Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. 5 Again the Lord called out, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli. He said, "Here I am. You called out to me." 6 "My son," Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back and lie down." 7 Samuel didn't know the Lord yet. That's because the Lord still hadn't given him a message.

8 The Lord called out to Samuel for the third time. Samuel got up and went to Eli. He said, "Here I am. You called out to me." 9 Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. 10 Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down. If someone calls out to you again, say, 'Speak, Lord. I'm listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

11 The Lord came and stood there. He called out, just as he had done the other times. Eli said, "Samuel! Samuel!" 12 Then Samuel replied, "Speak, I'm listening."

13 The Lord said to Samuel, "Pay attention! I am about to do something terrible in Israel. It will make the ears of everyone who hears about it ring. 14 That's that time I will do everything to Eli and his family that I said I would. I will finish what I have started. 15 I told Eli I would punish his family forever. He knew his sons were sinning. He knew they were making fun of me. In spite of that, he failed to stop them."

16 So I took an oath and made a promise to the family of Eli. I said, 'The sins of Eli's family will never be paid for by bringing sacrifices or offerings.'"

17 Samuel lay there until morning. Then he opened the doors of the Lord's house. He was afraid to tell Eli about the vision he had received. 18 Eli called out to him. He said, "Samuel, my son." 19 Samuel answered, "Here I am." 20 "What did the Lord say to you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide from me anything. You told you. If you do, my God will punish you greatly." 21 So Samuel told him everything. He didn't hide anything from him.

## Did You Know?

**How old was Samuel when God called him in the night?**  
3:1 Samuel was about 12 years old when God spoke to him. You don't have to be an adult to listen to God. You can be a child and obey God too.





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1 Samuel 3-4



Then Eli said, "He is the LORD. Let him do what he thinks is best."  
 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him. He made everything Samuel said come true. So all of the people of Israel recognized that Samuel really was a prophet of the LORD. Everyone from Dan all the way to Beersheba knew it.

The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh. There he made himself known to Samuel through the messages he gave him.  
 And Samuel gave these messages to all of the people of Israel.

### The Philistines Capture the Ark

The people of Israel went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer. The Philistines camped at Ashbek. The Philistines brought their forces together in fight against Israel. As the fighting spread, the men of Israel lost the battle to the Philistines. The Philistines killed about 4,000 of them on the field of battle.

The rest of the Israelite soldiers returned to camp. Then the elders asked them, "Why did the LORD let the Philistines win the battle over us today? Let's bring the ark of the LORD's covenant from Shiloh. Let's take it with us. It will save us from the power of our enemies."

So the people sent men to Shiloh. They brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD. He sits there on his throne between the cherubim. He is the One who rules over all. Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas were with the ark of the covenant of God in Shiloh.

The ark of the LORD's covenant was brought into the camp. Then all of the people of Israel shouted so loudly that the ground shook.

The Philistines heard the noise. They asked, "What's all that shouting about in the Hebrew camp?"

Then the Philistines found out that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. So they were afraid. "A god has come into their camp," they said. "We're in trouble! Nothing like this has ever happened before. How terrible it will be for us! Who will save us from the power of those mighty gods? They struck down the people of Egypt in the desert. They sent all kinds of plagues on them.  
 Philistines, be strong! Fight like men!

If you don't, you will come under the control of the Hebrews. You will become their slaves, just as they have been your slaves. Fight like men!"

The Philistines fought. The people of Israel lost. Every man ran back to his tent. A large number of them were killed. Israel lost 30,000 soldiers who were on foot.

The ark of God was captured. And Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas died.

### What Happened?

That same day a man from the tribe of Benjamin ran from the front lines of the battle. He went to Shiloh. His clothes were torn. He had dust on his head. When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair. He was by the side of the road. He was watching, because his heart was really concerned about the ark of God. The man called out to Eli and told everyone what had happened. Then the whole town cried out.

Eli heard the people crying out. He asked, "What's the meaning of all of this noise?"

The man hurried over to Eli. Eli was 98 years old. His eyes were so bad he couldn't see. The man told Eli, "I've just come from the front lines of the battle. I ran away from there this very day."

Eli asked, "What happened, son?"

The man who brought the news replied, "Israel ran away from the Philistines. Large numbers of men in the army were wounded or killed. Your two sons Hophni and Phinehas are also dead. And the ark of God has been captured."

When the man spoke about the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair. He had been sitting by the side of the gate. When he fell, he broke his neck and died. He was old and fat. He had led Israel for 40 years.

The wife of Phinehas was pregnant. She was Eli's daughter-in-law. It was near the time for her baby to be born. She heard the news that the ark of God had been captured. She heard that her father-in-law and her husband were dead. So she went into labor and had her baby. Her pain was so great that her life was slipping away.

As she was dying, the women who were helping her spoke up. They said, "Don't be afraid. You have had a son." But she didn't reply. She didn't say any other word.

1 Samuel 4-5

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### Did You Know?

What were Ashdod and Ekron?  
 554-10 They were strong Philistine cities. The Philistines had five large cities.



of Israel must not stay here with us. His powerful hand is punishing us and our god Dagon."

So they called all of the rulers of the Philistines together. They asked them, "What should we do with the ark of the god of Israel?"

The rulers answered, "Have the ark moved to Gath. So they moved it."

But after the people of Ashdod had moved the ark, the LORD's hand punished Gath. That threw its people into a great panic. The LORD made them break out with growths in their bodies. It happened to young people and old people alike. When the ark of God was sent to Ekron.

As the ark was entering Ekron, the people of the city cried out. They shouted, "They've brought the ark of the god of Israel to us. They want to kill us and our people."

So they called all of the rulers of the Philistines together. They said, "Send the ark of the god of Israel away. Let it go back to its own place. If you don't, it will

She named the boy Ishbosh. She said, "The God of glory has left Israel." She said it because the ark of God had been captured. She also said it because her father-in-law and her husband had died. She said, "The God of glory has left Israel." She said it because the ark of God had been captured.

### The Ark Is Taken to Ashdod and Ekron

The Philistines had captured the ark of God. They took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. They carried the ark into the temple of their god Dagon. They set it down beside the statue of Dagon.

The people of Ashdod got up early the next day. They saw the statue of Dagon. There it was, lying on the ground. It had fallen on its face in front of the ark of the LORD. So they moved the statue of Dagon up. They put it back in its place.

But the following morning when they got up, they saw the statue of Dagon. There it was, lying on the ground again. It had fallen on its face in front of the ark of the LORD. The head and hands had been broken off. Only the body of the statue was left. Its head and hands were lying in the doorway of the temple. That's why to this very day no one steps on the bottom part of the doorway of Dagon's temple at Ashdod. Not even the priests of Dagon step there.

The LORD's powerful hand punished the people of Ashdod and the settlements that were near it. He destroyed them. He made them sick with growths in their bodies. The people of Ashdod saw what was happening. They said, "The ark of the god

### The Broken Idol

The Philistines worshipped a statue made of clay. They called it their god, Dagon. The god looked like a man with a fish's tail and a fish's head. Dagon fell and broke apart in front of the ark of the covenant. This showed that the Lord is the true God.

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## Bible Lesson III: FAITH

Timothy



# 2 Timothy

## Who wrote this book?

Paul wrote this book.

## Why was this book written?

Paul knew that he was about to die. He wanted Timothy to keep on working hard. He wanted Timothy to know how much he loved him too.

## For whom was this book written?

This book is a letter that Paul sent to his helper Timothy. But God meant it for Christians everywhere.

## When was this book written?

This book was written about 35 years after Jesus returned to heaven. Paul was in prison again.

## What are some important teachings in this book?

Teachers should teach God's truth.....

2 Timothy 1:8-14

Teachers should teach gently... 2 Timothy 2:23-26

Teachers should teach carefully... 2 Timothy 4:1-5

1 Paul, am writing this letter. I am an apostle of Christ Jesus just as God planned. He sent me to tell about the promise of life that is found in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy, I am sending you this letter. You are my dear son.

3 May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy and peace.

### Paul Tells Timothy to Be Faithful

4 I wrote God, knowing that what I have done is right. That is how our people served him long ago. Night and day I thank God for you. Night and day I always remember you in my prayers.

5 I remember your tears. I long to see you so that I can be filled with joy. I remember your honesty and true faith. It was alive first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice. And I am certain that it is now alive in you also.

6 That is why I remind you to keep God's gift given just as a small spark grows into a fire. And you will get it in you when I place my hands on you.

7 God didn't give us a spirit that makes us weak and fearful. He gave us a spirit that gives us power and love. It helps us control ourselves.

8 So don't be ashamed to give witness about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, his prisoner. Instead, join with me as I suffer for the good news. God's power will help us to do that.

9 God has saved us. He has called us to live a holy life. It wasn't because of anything we have done. It was because of his own purpose and grace. Through Christ Jesus, God gave us that grace even before time began. And has now made known through the coming of our Savior, Christ Jesus. He has destroyed death. Because of

## Words to Treasure

Don't be ashamed to give witness about our Lord.

the good news, he has brought life out of the light. That life never dies.

11 I was appointed to announce the good news. I was appointed to be an apostle and a teacher. 12 That's why I'm suffering the way I am. But I'm not ashamed. I know the One I have believed in. I am sure he is able to protect what I have given him. I can trust him with it until the day he returns as judge.

13 Follow what you heard from me as the pattern of true teaching. Follow it with faith and love because you belong to Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the truth of the good news that you were trusted with. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. 15 You know that all the believers in Asia Minor have deserted me. They include Phrygians and Hieronymus.

16 May the Lord show mercy to all who are in the house of Onesiphorus. He didn't desert me. He was not ashamed that I was being held by chains. 17 In fact, it was just the opposite. When he was in Rome, he looked everywhere for me. At last he found me.

18 May Onesiphorus find mercy from the Lord on the day Jesus returns as judge. You know very well how many ways Onesiphorus helped me in Ephesus.

19 My son, be strong in the grace that is found in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach in front of many witnesses. Pass

## What You Heard

Read 2 Timothy 1:13-14. Paul taught Timothy about God and

Jesus. Who taught you about God? Your parents? Minister?

Read out loud each one to tell you what they want you to remember.

more than anything else. Write it down! Look at your list every few weeks.

Remember what you have learned.

## Lively

2 Timothy 1:13-14

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2 Timothy 2

## Did You Know?

**What are good Christians like?**  
2:23-26 Good Christians are like soldiers. They obey this on in charge. They are like sports stars. They train hard to win. They are like farmers. They work hard and are willing to wait for their reward.



and to men you can trust the things you've heard the say. Think they will be able to teach others also. 24 Be a good soldier of Christ Jesus, shun in the hard times with us.

24 A soldier does not take part in things that don't have anything to do with the army. He wants to please his commanding officer. In the same way, anyone who takes part in a good doesn't receive the witness's crown unless he plays by the rules. 25 The farmer who works hard should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

26 Think about what I'm saying. The Lord will help you understand what all of it means. Remember Jesus Christ. He came from David's family line. He was raised from the dead. That is my good news. I am suffering for it. I have even been put in chains like someone who has committed a crime. But God's word is not held back by chains. 27 So I put up with everything for the good of God's church people. Then they also can be saved. Christ Jesus saves them. He gives them glory that will last forever.

27 Here is a saying you can trust.

If we died with him,

we will also live with him.

28 If we don't give up,

we will also rule with him.

If we say we don't know him,

he will also say he doesn't know us.

29 Even if we are not faithful,

he will remain faithful.

He must be true to himself.

A warrior who pleases God

14 Keep reminding the leaders of those things. While God is watching, warn them

not to argue about words. That doesn't have any value; it only makes those who listen.

20 Do your best to please God. Be a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed. Teach the message of truth correctly. 21 Stay away from godless chatter. Those who talk part in it will become more and more ungodly. 22 Their teaching will spread like a deadly sickness.

Hymeneus and Philetus are two of these teachers. 23 They have wandered away from the truth. They say that the time when people will live from the dead has already come. They destroy the faith of some people.

24 But God's solid foundation stands firm. Here is the message written on it: "The Lord knows who his own people are." (1 Timothy 3:16) Also, "All who say they believe in the Lord must turn away from evil."

25 In a large house there are things made out of gold and silver. But there are also things made out of wood and clay. Some have honorable purposes. Others do not. 26 Suppose someone strips away from what is not honorable. Then the Master will be able to use him for honorable purposes. He will be made holy. He will be ready to do any good work.

27 Stay away from the evil things that young people long for. Try hard to do what is right. Have faith, love and peace. Do these things together with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 28 Don't have anything to do with anything. It is dumb and foolish. You know it only leads to fights.

29 Anyone who nurses the Lord must not fight back. He must be kind to everyone.

## Words of Treasure

"I've tried to do right, to have peace, to have things together with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

2 Timothy 2-4

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## Words of Treasure

15a God everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be treated badly. All people and pretenders will go from bad to worse. They will fool others, and others will fool them.

16 But I want you to continue to follow what you have learned. Don't give up what you are sure of. You know the people you learned it from. You have known the Holy Scriptures ever since you were a little child. They are able to train you how to be saved by believing in Christ Jesus.

17 If God has trained us into all of Scripture, it is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. 18 By using Scripture, a man of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing.

19 I give you a command in the sight of God and Christ Jesus. Christ will judge the living and the dead. Because he and his kingdom are coming, here is the command I give you. 20 Preach the word. Be ready to serve God in good times and bad. Correct people's mistakes. Warn them. Clutch them up with words of hope. Be very patient as you do these things. Teach them carefully.

21 The time will come when people won't put up with true teaching. Instead, they will try to satisfy their own feelings. They will gather a large number of teachers around them. The teachers will say what the people want to hear. 22 The people will turn their backs away from the truth. They will turn to stories that aren't completely true.

23 But I want you to keep your head no matter what happens. Don't give up when times are hard. Work to spread the good news. Do everything God has given you to do. 24 I am already being poured out like a

he must be able to teach. He must not hold anything against anyone, as the ungodly teach those who oppose him.

Maybe God will give a change of heart to those who are against you. That will lead them to know the truth. Maybe they will come to their senses. Maybe they will escape the devil's trap. He has taken them prisoner to do what he wanted.

25 Here is what I want you to know.

26 There will be terrible times in the last days. People will love themselves. They will love money. They will brag and be proud. They will tear others down. They will not obey their parents. They won't be thankful or loyal. They won't love others. They won't forgive others. They will tell lies about people. They will be out of control. They will be wild. They will hate what is good.

27 They will turn against their friends. They will act without thinking. They will think they are better than others. They will love what pleases their stomachs of loving God. They will act as if they were serving God. But what they do will show that they have turned their backs on God's power. They're looking to do with these people.

28 They are the kind who worm their way into the homes of silly women. They get control over them. Women like that are loaded down with sins. They give in to all kinds of evil longings. They are always learning. But they never come to know the truth.

29 James and Janites opposed Moses. In the same way, the teachers I'm talking about oppose the truth. Their minds are twisted. As far as the faith is concerned, God doesn't accept them. They won't get very far. Just like James and Janites, their foolish ways will be clear to everyone.

Paul gives a command to Timothy

10 But you know all about my teaching. You know how I live and what I live for. You know about my faith and love. You know how patient I am. You know I haven't given up. 11 You know that I was treated badly. You know that I suffered greatly. You know what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. You know how badly I have been treated. But the Lord saved me from all of my troubles.

Bible Lesson IV: OBEDIENCE

Jonah

# Jonah

## Who wrote this book?

The prophet Jonah wrote this book.

## Why was this book written?

This book shows that God is happy when people stop sinning. He does not punish people if they are sorry for their sins.

## What do we learn about God in this book?

Jonah tries to run away from God. But God forgives Jonah. He gives Jonah a second chance. God also forgives the people of Nineveh. God does not punish them.

## What is special about this book?

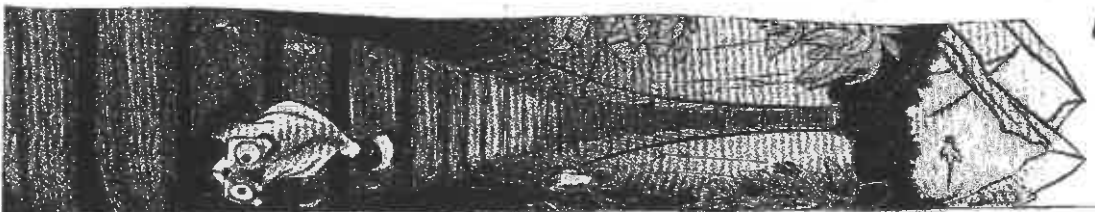
God loves all people. He loves the people in Nineveh. And he loves his own people in Israel too.

## When was this book written?

This book was written after the kingdom was split into Israel and Judah. It was written about 60 years before the northern kingdom fell. That's about 200 years before Jerusalem was destroyed.

## What are some of the stories of this book?

A fish swallows Jonah ..... Jonah 1  
The people of Nineveh are sorry for their sins ..... Jonah 3  
God teaches Jonah to care about all people ..... Jonah 4



## Jonah Runs Away From the Lord

A messenger from the Lord came to Jonah. He was the son of Amittai. The Lord said, "Go to the great city of Nineveh. Preach against it. The sins of its people have come to my attention."

But Jonah ran away from the Lord. He headed for Tarshish. So he went down to the port of Joppa. There he found a ship that was going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went on board. Then he sailed for Tarshish.

But the Lord sent a strong wind over the Mediterranean Sea. A wild storm came up. It was so wild that the ship was in danger of breaking apart. All of the sailors were afraid. Each one cried out to his own god for help. They threw the ship's contents into the sea. They were trying to make the ship lighter.

But Jonah had gone below deck. There he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went down to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call out to your god for help! Maybe he'll pay attention to what's happening to us. Then we won't die."

"The sailors said to one another, 'Come. Let's cast lots to find out who is to blame for getting us into all of this trouble.' So they did. And Jonah was picked."

They asked him, "What terrible thing have you done to bring all of this trouble on us? Tell us! What do you do for a living? Where do you come from? What is your country? What people do you belong to?" He answered, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the Lord. He is the God of heaven. He made the sea and the land."

So they found out he was running away

## Jonah, 1-2

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from the Lord. That's because he had told them. Then they became terrified. So they asked him, "How could you do a thing like that?"

"The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, 'What should we do to you to make the sea calm down?'" He replied, "I know it's my fault that this terrible storm has come on you."

Instead of doing what he said, the men did their best to row back to land. But they couldn't. The sea got even rougher than before.

Then they cried out to the Lord. They prayed, "Lord, please don't let us die for taking this man's life. After all, he might not be guilty of doing anything wrong. So don't hold us accountable for killing him. Lord, you always do what you want to." Then they looked at Jonah and threw him overboard. And the stormy sea became calm.

When the men saw what had happened, they began to have great respect for the Lord. They offered a sacrifice to him. And they made promises to him.

But the Lord sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

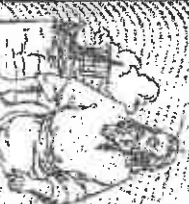
## Jonah Prays to the Lord

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said,

"When I was in trouble, I called out to you. And you answered me. When I had almost drowned, I called out for help. And you listened to my cry."

And you answered me. When I had almost drowned, I called out for help. And you listened to my cry."

## Jonah's Trip



Nineveh was far to the northeast of Joppa, and Tarshish was far to the west. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah got on a ship going to Tarshish instead. He went the opposite direction! This Bible book tells us why, and it tells us what happened to Jonah.



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Jonah 2-3

<sup>2</sup>You threw me into the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>3</sup>I was in the middle of its waters. They were all around me.

<sup>4</sup>All of your roiling waves were sweeping over me.

<sup>5</sup>I said, "I have been driven away from you."

<sup>6</sup>But I will look again toward your holy temple in Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup>I had almost drowned in the waves. The deep waters were all around me. Servant was wrapped around my head.

<sup>8</sup>I sank down on the bottom of the mountains.

<sup>9</sup>I thought I had died and gone down into the grave forever. But you brought my life up from the very edge of the pit.

<sup>10</sup>You are the LORD my God.

<sup>11</sup>"When my life was nearly over, I remembered you, LORD.

<sup>12</sup>My prayer rose up to you. It reached you in your holy temple in heaven.

<sup>13</sup>"Some people worship the worthless statues of their gods. They turn away from the grace you want to give them.

<sup>14</sup>But I will sacrifice a thank offering to you.

<sup>15</sup>And I will sing a song of thanks. I will do what I have promised.

<sup>16</sup>LORD, you are the one who saves."

<sup>17</sup>The LORD gave the fish a command. And it spit Jonah up onto dry land.

### Jonah Goes to Nineveh

<sup>1</sup>A message came to Jonah from the LORD a second time. He said, <sup>2</sup>"Go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce to its people the message I give you."

<sup>3</sup>Jonah obeyed the LORD. He went to Nineveh. It was a very important city. In fact, it took about three days to see all of it.

<sup>4</sup>On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He announced, "In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed."

<sup>5</sup>The people of Nineveh believed God's warning. They decided not to eat any food for a while. All of them put on black clothes. That's what everyone from the least important to the most important did.

<sup>6</sup>The news reached the king of Nineveh. He got up from his throne. He took his royal robes off and dressed himself in black clothes. He sat down in the dust. <sup>7</sup>Then he sent out a message to the people of Nineveh. He said,

<sup>8</sup>"I and my babies give this order: 'Don't let any person or animal eat anything. That includes your heads and flocks. People and animals must not eat or drink anything. Let people and animals alike be covered with black cloth. All of you must call out to God with all your hearts. Stop doing what is evil. Don't harm others. Who knows? God might take pity on us. He might turn away from his burning anger. Then we won't die.'

<sup>9</sup>God saw what they did. They stopped doing what was evil. So he took pity on them. He didn't destroy them as he had said he would.

### The Lord Shows Concern for Nineveh

<sup>1</sup>But Jonah was very upset. He became angry. <sup>2</sup>He prayed to the LORD and said, "LORD, isn't this exactly what I thought would happen when I was still at home? That's why I was so quick to run away to Tarshish. I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You don't want to destroy them. <sup>3</sup>LORD, take away my life. I'd rather die than live."

<sup>4</sup>But the LORD replied, "Do you have any right to be angry?"

<sup>5</sup>Jonah left the city. He sat down at a place east of it. There he put some brambles over his head. He sat in their shade. He waited to see what would happen to the city.

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD God sent a vine and made it grow up over Jonah. It gave him shade for his head.

<sup>7</sup>Jonah was very happy. He had the vine. But before sunrise the next day, God sent a worm. It chewed the vine so much that it died up.

<sup>8</sup>When the sun rose, God sent a burning east wind. The sun beat down on Jonah's head. It made him very weak. He wanted to die. So he said, "I'd rather die than live."

<sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah, "Do you have any right to be angry about what happened to the vine?"

<sup>10</sup>"Yes," he said. "In fact, I'm angry enough to die."

<sup>11</sup>But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine. But you did not take care of it. You did not make it grow. It grew up in one night and died the next. <sup>12</sup>Nineveh has more than 120,000 people. They can't tell right from wrong. Nineveh also has a lot of cattle. So shouldn't I show concern for that great city?"

Jonah 3-4

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more shade for his head. It made him more comfortable. Jonah was very happy he had the vine. But before sunrise the next day, God sent a worm. It chewed the vine so much that it died up.

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### Jonah

How do you feel when something good happens to someone who isn't very nice? Do you feel upset? Jonah felt that way. He told the evil people of Nineveh that God intended to destroy their city. The people believed the warning. They stopped doing what was evil. God forgave them. He gave them another chance.

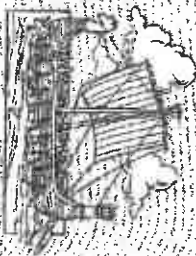
Find a baseball and bounce it on a hard surface. Try to count the number of times it bounces. In the same way, God forgives us over and over.



Jonah 4:1-11

### Cargo Ships

In ancient times cargo ships carried wood, grain, animals and many other things from one port to another. The crew of a ship lived and slept on the deck of that ship. When storms came they went to the sheltered harbor because otherwise they might be swept away by the wind and waves.



## Bible Lesson V: CHOICES

Nicodemus

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John 24

<sup>27</sup>Some of our women amazed us too. Early this morning they went to the tomb. <sup>28</sup>But they didn't find the body. So they came and told us what they had seen. They saw angels, who said Jesus was alive. <sup>29</sup>Then some of our friends went to the tomb. They saw it was empty, just as the women had said. They didn't see Jesus' body there."

<sup>30</sup>Jesus said to them, "How foolish you are! How long it takes you to believe all that the prophets said! Didn't the Christ have to suffer these things and then receive his glory?"

<sup>31</sup>Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures. He began with Moses and all the Prophets.

<sup>32</sup>The two men approached the village where they were going. Jesus acted as if he were going farther. When they tried hard to keep him from leaving, they said, "Stay with us. It is nearly evening. The day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

He joined them at the table. Then he took bread and gave thanks. He broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>33</sup>Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. But then he disappeared from their sight.

<sup>34</sup>They said to each other, "He talked with us on the road. He opened the Scriptures to us. We don't see his body burning inside us during that time."

<sup>35</sup>They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them. They were all gathered together. <sup>36</sup>They were saying, "It's true! The Lord has risen! He has appeared to Simon!"

<sup>37</sup>Then the two of them told what had happened to them on the way. They told how they had recognized Jesus when he broke the bread.

### Jesus Appears to the Disciples

<sup>38</sup>The disciples were still talking about this when Jesus himself suddenly stood

among them. He said, "May peace be with you!"

<sup>39</sup>They were surprised and terrified. They thought they were seeing a ghost.

<sup>40</sup>Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled? Why do you have doubts in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is really I. Touch me and see. A ghost does not have a body or bones. But you can see that I do."

<sup>41</sup>After he said that, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>42</sup>But they still did not believe it. They were amazed and filled with joy.

So Jesus asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

<sup>43</sup>They gave him a piece of cooked fish. <sup>44</sup>He took it and ate it in front of them.

<sup>45</sup>Jesus said to them, "This is what I told you while I was with you. Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must come true."

<sup>46</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>47</sup>He told them, "This is what is written. The Christ will suffer. He will rise from the dead on the third day. <sup>48</sup>His followers will go out in his name. They will tell others to turn away from their sins and be baptized. People from every nation will hear it, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>49</sup>You have seen these things with your own eyes.

<sup>50</sup>I am going to send you what my Father has promised. But for now, stay in the city. Stay there until you have received power from heaven."

### Jesus Is Taken Up Into Heaven

<sup>51</sup>Jesus led his disciples out to the area near Bethany. Then he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>52</sup>While he was blessing them, he left them. He was taken up into heaven.

<sup>53</sup>Then they worshiped him. With great joy, they returned to Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup>Every day they went to the temple, praising God.



John

### Who wrote this book?

John was a follower of Jesus. He wrote this book.

### Why was this book written?

This book shows that Jesus is the Son of God.

### For whom was this book written?

John wrote this book for everyone who wants to understand who Jesus really is.

### What happens in this book?

John tells about wonderful things Jesus did that show that Jesus is the Son of God.

### Who is important in this book?

Jesus is the important person in this book.

### When did this happen?

The events in this book happened when Jesus lived on this earth.

### Where did this happen?

Most of the things in this book happened in Judea.

### What are some of the stories in this book?

- Jesus chooses his followers..... John 1:35-51
- Jesus teaches Nicodemus..... John 3:1-21
- Jesus talks to a woman of Samaria..... John 4:1-26
- Jesus walks on the water..... John 6:16-24
- Jesus says he is God's Son..... John 8:11-59
- Jesus heals a blind man..... John 9:1-41
- Jesus is a good shepherd..... John 10:1-21
- Jesus brings Lazarus back to life..... John 11:1-44
- Jesus washes feet..... John 13:1-17
- Jesus keeps..... John 17:6-25
- Jesus rises and is buried..... John 19:28-42
- Jesus' tomb is empty..... John 20:1-31
- Jesus forgives Peter..... John 21:15-35







Bible Lesson VI: FORGIVING

Prodigal Son



1220

16:15-16

16 Then he began to think clearly again. He said, "How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food? But here I am crying from hunger! I will get up and go back to my father. I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven. And I have sinned against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.' " 16 So he got up and went to his father.

17 While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him. He was filled with tender love for his son. He ran to him. He threw his arms around him and blessed him.

18 The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son."

19 But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattest calf and kill it. Let's have a big dinner and celebrate. 20 This son of mine was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found."

21 So they began to celebrate.

22 The older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 23 So he called one of the servants. He asked him what was going on.

24 "Your brother has come home," the servant replied. "Your father has killed the fattest calf. He has done this because your brother came back safe and sound."

25 The older brother became angry. He refused to go in. So his other went out and begged him.

26 But he answered his father, "Look! All these years I've worked like a slave for you. I have always obeyed your orders. You never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But this son of yours wasted your money with some prostitutes. Now he comes home. And for him you kill the fattest calf!"

27 "My son," the father said, "you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad. This brother of yours was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found."

**The story of the Clever Manager**

16 Jesus told his disciples another story. He said, "There was a rich man who had a manager. Some said that the manager was wasting what the rich

man owned. So the rich man told him to come in. He asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Tell me exactly how you have handled what I own. You can't be my manager any longer.'"

17 The manager said to himself, 'What will I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm too ashamed to beg. I know what I'm going to do. I'll do something so that when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

18 So he called to each person who owed his master something. He asked the first one, 'How much do you owe my master?' 19 "I owe 800 gallons of olive oil," he replied.

20 The manager told him, 'Take your bill. Sit down quickly and change it to 400 gallons.' 21 Then he asked the second one, 'And how much do you owe?' 22 "I owe 1,000 bushels of wheat," he replied.

23 The manager told him, 'Take your bill and change it to 800 bushels.'

24 The manager had not been honest. But the master praised him for being clever. The people of this world are clever in dealing with those who are the least honest. They are more clever than God's people."

25 "I tell you, use the riches of this world to help others. In that way, you will make friends for yourselves. Then when your riches are gone, you will be welcomed into your eternal home in heaven."

26 "Suppose you can be trusted with very little. Then you can be trusted with very much. But suppose you are not honest with very little. Then you will not be honest with very much."

27 "Suppose you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth. Then who will trust you with the riches of heaven? You have not been worthy of trust in handling someone else's property. Then who will give you property of your own?"

28 No servant can serve two masters at the same time. He will hate one of them and love the other. Or he will be faithful to one and dislike the other. You can't serve God and money at the same time."

17 The Pharisees loved money. They heard all that Jesus said and made fun of him. 18 Jesus said to them, "You try to make yourselves look good in the eyes of other

people. But God knows your hearts. What is worth a great deal among people is hated by God."

**More Teachings**

18 The teachings of the Law and the prophets were preached until John came. Since then, the good news of God's kingdom is being preached. And everyone is trying very hard to enter it. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the smallest part of a letter to drop out of the Law.

19 Anyone who divorces his wife and gets married to another woman commits adultery. Also, the man who gets married to a divorced woman commits adultery.

**The Rich Man and Lazarus**

19 Once there was a rich man. He was dressed in purple cloth and fine linen. He lived an easy life every day. 20 A man named Lazarus was lying at the gate. Lazarus was a beggar. His body was covered with sores. 21 Every day dogs came and licked his sores. All he wanted was to eat what fell from the rich man's table.

22 The time came when the beggar died. The angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 But the rich man was suffering terribly. He looked up and saw Abraham far away. Lazarus was by his side. 24 So the rich man called out, 'Father Abraham! Have pity on me! Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water. Then he can cool my tongue with it. I am in terrible pain in this fire.'

25 But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember what happened in your lifetime. You received good things. Lazarus received bad things. Now he is comforted here, and you are in terrible pain. Besides, a wide space has been placed between us and you. So those who want to go from here to you can't go. And no one can cross over from here to us.'

26 The rich man answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family. 27 I have five brothers. Let Lazarus warn them. Then they will not come to this place of terrible suffering.'

28 Abraham replied, 'They have the writings of Moses and the Prophets. Let them read them and listen to them.'

29 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'But if

someone from the dead goes to them, they will turn away from their sins.' 30 Abraham said to him, 'They do not listen to Moses and the Prophets. So they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

**Sea, Faith and Duty**

17 Jesus spoke to his disciples. "Things that make people sin are sure to come," he said. "But how terrible it will be for the person who brings them! Suppose people lead one of these little ones to sin. It would be better for these people to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck. So watch what you do."

18 "If your brother sins, tell him he is wrong. Then if he turns away from his sins, forgive him. Suppose he sins against you seven times in one day. And suppose he comes back to you each time and says, 'I'm sorry.' Forgive him."

19 The apostles said to the Lord, "Give us more faith!" 20 He replied, "Suppose you have faith as small as a mustard seed. Then you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up. Be planted in the sea.' And it will obey you."

21 "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep, and suppose the servant came in from the field. Would you say to him, 'Come along now and sit down to eat?' No, instead, you would say, 'Prepare my supper. Get yourself ready. Wait on me while I eat and drink. Then after that you can eat and drink.' Would you thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?"

22 "If it's the same with you. Suppose you have done everything you were told to do. Then you should say, 'We are not worthy to serve you. We have only done our duty.'"

**Jesus Meets Ten Men**

18 Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 19 As he was going into a village, ten men met him. They had a skin disease. They were standing close by. 20 And they called out in a loud voice, "Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!"

21 Jesus saw them and said, "Go. Show yourselves to the priests." While they were on the way, they were healed.

1221

1222

**Bible Lesson VII: CHILDREN'S ROLE****Eli and his two sons**

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## 1 Samuel 1

## Samuel Is Born

A certain man from Ramathaim in the hill country of Ephraim was named Elkanah. He was the son of Jeroham, Jeroham was the son of Elihu, Elihu was the son of Tohu. Tohu was the son of Zuph. Elkanah belonged to the family line of Zuph. Elkanah lived in the territory of Ephraim.

Elkanah had two wives. One was named Hannah. The other was named Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah didn't. A year after year Elkanah went up from his town to Shiloh. He went there to worship and sacrifice to the LORD with rules over all. Hophni and Phinehas served as priests of the LORD at Shiloh. They were the two sons of Eli.

Every time the day came for Elkanah to offer a sacrifice, he would give a share of the meat to his wife Peninnah. He would also give a share to each of her sons and daughters. But he would give two shares of meat to Hannah. That's because he loved her. He also gave her two shares because the LORD had kept her from having children.

Peninnah teased Hannah to make her angry. She did it because the LORD had kept Hannah from having children. Peninnah teased Hannah year after year. Every time Hannah would go up to the house of the LORD, Elkanah's other wife would tease her. She would keep doing it until Hannah cried and wouldn't eat.

After husband Elkanah would speak to her. He would say, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why don't you eat? Why are you so angry and unhappy? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

One time when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. The priest Eli was sitting on a chair by the doorstep of the LORD's house. Johanan

was very bitter. She sobbed and sobbed. She prayed to the LORD. "LORD, I made a promise to you. Please see how I'm suffering! Show concern for me! Don't forget about me! Please give me a son! If you do, I'll give him back to you. Then he will serve you all the days of his life. He'll never use a razor on his head. He'll never cut his hair."

Now Hannah kept on praying to the LORD. Eli watched her lips. He was praying in her heart. Her lips were moving. But she wasn't making a sound.

Eli thought Hannah was drunk. He said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

"I'm a woman who is deeply troubled. I haven't been drinking wine or beer. I was telling the LORD all of my troubles. I don't think of me as an evil woman. I've been praying here because I'm very sad. My pain is so great."

Eli answered, "Go in peace. May the God of Israel give you what you have asked him for."

She said, "May you be pleased with me." Then she left and had something to eat. Her face wasn't sad anymore.

Early the next morning Elkanah and his family got up. They worshipped the LORD. Then they went back to their home in Ramah.

Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah. And the LORD showed concern for her.

After some time, Hannah became pregnant. She had a baby boy. She said, "I asked the LORD for him." So she named him Samuel.

## Hannah Gives Samuel to the LORD

One time when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. The priest Eli was sitting on a chair by the doorstep of the LORD's house. Johanan

## A Gift to and From God

Did you know that many mothers pray for their children? Do their children pray for them? Ask if she did this for you.

Then read 1 Samuel 1:1-20. Hannah asked God to give her a child. She promised to give him back to God. Was anything in Hannah's prayer like your mother's prayers for you?

there to keep a promise he had made. His whole family went with him.

When Hannah didn't go, she said to her husband, "When the boy doesn't need me to nurse him anymore, I'll take him to the LORD's house. I'll give him to the LORD there. He'll stay there for the rest of his life."

Her husband Elkanah told her, "Do what you think is best. Stay here at home until Samuel doesn't need you to nurse him anymore. May the LORD make his promise to you come true."

So Hannah stayed home. She nursed her son until he didn't need her milk anymore.

When the boy didn't need her to nurse him anymore, she took him with her to Shiloh. She took him there even though he was still very young. She brought him to the LORD's house. She brought along a bull that was three years old. She brought more than half a bushel of flour. She also brought a bottle of wine. The bottle was made out of animal skin.

After the bull was killed, Elkanah and Hannah brought the boy to Eli. Elkanah said to Eli, "Sit, I'm the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. And that's just as sure as you are alive. I prayed for this child. The LORD has given me what I asked him for. So now I'm giving him to the LORD. As long as he lives he'll be given to the LORD." And all of them worshipped the LORD there.

## Hannah Gives Thanks to the LORD

Then Hannah prayed. She said,

"The LORD has filled my heart with joy. I can laugh at my enemies. I'm so glad he saved me."

"There isn't anyone holy like the LORD. There isn't anyone except him. There isn't any Rock like our God."

"Don't keep talking so proudly. Don't let your mouth say such proud things."

The LORD is a God who knows everything. He judges everything people do.

"The boys of great heroes are broken. But those who trip and fall are made strong."

"Those who used to be full have to work for food."

1 Samuel 1-2

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But those who used to be hungry aren't hungry anymore. The woman who couldn't have children has seven of them now. But the woman who has had many children is sad now because her son has died.

"The LORD causes people to die. He also gives people life. He brings people down to the grave. He also brings people up. He also makes people rich. He also makes people poor. He also lifts people up. He also raises poor people up from the trash pile."

He lifts needy people out of the ashes. He lets them sit with princes. He gives them places of honor. The foundations of the earth belong to the LORD. On them he has set the world. He guards the paths of those who are faithful to him. But evil people will be silent in their dark graves.

"People don't win just because they are strong. Those who oppose the LORD will be totally destroyed. He will thunder against them from heaven. He will judge the earth from one end to the other. He will give power to his king. He will give honor to his anointed one."

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1 Samuel 2

## Did You Know?

What was Eli's sin?

2:1-2 Eli was a high priest. His sons were priests too. Eli let his sons disobey God and do evil things. This chapter tells what happened to Eli for letting his sons sin. It also tells what would happen to Eli's sons.



15 Then Hannah went home to Kannah, but the boy Samuel served the LORD under the direction of the priest Eli.

## Eli's Evil Sons

16 Eli's sons were evil men. They didn't know the LORD. 17 When anyone came to offer a sacrifice, here is what the priests would do. While the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a large fork in his hand. 18 He would stick it into the pot or pot or small or large kettle. Then the priest would take for himself everything the fork brought up. That's how Eli's sons treated all of the people of Israel who came to Shiloh.

19 Even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come over. He would speak to the man who was offering the sacrifice. He would say, "Give the priest some meat to cook. He won't accept boiled meat from you. All he'll accept is raw meat." 20 Sometimes the man would say to him, "I, at the far be burned up first. Then take what you want." 21 But the servant would answer, "No. Hand it over right now. If you don't, I'll take it away from you by force."

22 That's how Eli's sons were very great in the LORD's sight. That's because they were making fun of his offering.

23 But the boy Samuel served the LORD. He wore a sacred linen apron. 24 Each year his mother made him a little robe. She took it to him when she went up to Shiloh with her husband. She did it when her husband went to offer the yearly sacrifice.

25 Eli would bless Hannah and his wife. He would say, "May the LORD give you children by this woman. May they take the

place of the boy who prayed for and gave to him." Then they would go home.

26 The LORD was gracious to Hannah. She became pregnant. Over a period of years she had three more sons and two daughters. During that whole time the boy Samuel grew up serving the LORD.

27 Eli was very old. He kept hearing about everything the sons were doing to all of the people of Israel. He also heard how they were having sex with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of Meeting.

28 So Eli said to his sons, "Why are you doing these things? All of the people are telling me about the evil things you are doing. 29 No, my sons. The report I hear isn't good. And it's spreading among the LORD's people. 30 If a man sins against someone else, God can help that sinner. But if a man sins against the LORD, who can help him?"

31 In spite of what their father Eli said, his sons didn't pay any attention to his warning. That's because the LORD had already decided to put them to death.

32 The boy Samuel continued to grow stronger. He also became more and more pleasing to the LORD and to people.

## A Man of God Prophesies Against Eli's Family

33 A man of God came to Eli. He told him, "The LORD says, 'I made myself clearly known to your relatives who lived long ago. I did it when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh. 34 I chose your father Aaron to be my priest. I chose him out of all of the tribes of Israel. I told him to go up to my altar. I told him to burn incense. I chose him to wear a linen apron when he served me. I also gave his family all of the offerings that are made with fire by the people of Israel.'"

35 "Why do all of you laugh at my sacrifices and offerings? I require them to be brought to the house where I live. Why do you honor your sons more than me? Why do you bring yourselves on the best parts of every offering that is made by my people Israel?"

36 "The LORD is the God of Israel. He anointed me, I promised that your family and the family of Aaron would serve me as priests forever."

37 But now the LORD anoints me, I will not let that happen. I will honor those who

honor me. But I will turn away from those who look down on me. 38 The time is coming when I will cut your line short. I will also cut short the lives of those in your family. No man in your family line will grow old."

39 "You will see nothing but trouble in the house where I live. Good things will still happen to Israel. But no man in your family line will ever grow old. 40 A member of your family will serve me at my altar. But what he does will bring tears to your eyes. Your heart will be sad. And the rest of the men in your family line will die while they are still young."

41 "Something is going to happen to your two sons. Hophni and Phinehas. When it does, it will show you that what I am saying is true. They will both die on the same day. 42 'I will raise up for myself a faithful priest. He will do what my heart and mind want him to do. I will make his family line very secure. They will always serve as priests to my anointed king. 43 Everyone who is left in your family line will come and bow down to him. They will bring him for a piece of silver and a crust of bread. They will say, 'Please give me a place to serve among the priests. Then I can have food to eat.'"

## The Lord Calls Out to Samuel

44 The boy Samuel served the LORD under the direction of Eli. In those days the LORD didn't give many messages to the people. He didn't give them many visions.

45 One night Eli was lying down in his usual place. His eyes were becoming so weak he couldn't see very well. Samuel was lying down in the LORD's house. That's where the ark of God was kept. The lamp

1 Samuel 2-3

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of God was still burning. 46 The LORD called out to Samuel.

47 Samuel answered, "Here I am." 48 He ran over to Eli. He said, "Here I am. You called out to me."

49 But Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

50 Again the LORD called out, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli. He said, "Here I am. You called out to me."

51 "My son," Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back and lie down."

52 "Samuel didn't know that! Yet that's because the LORD still hadn't given him a message."

53 The LORD called out to Samuel for the third time. Samuel got up and went to Eli. He said, "Here I am. You called out to me."

54 Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Get up and lie down. If someone calls out to you again, say, 'Speak, LORD. I'm listening.' So Samuel went and lay down in his place."

55 The LORD came and stood there. He called only just as he had done the other times. He said, "Samuel! Samuel!"

56 Then Samuel replied, "Speak, I'm listening."

57 The LORD said to Samuel, "Pay attention! I am about to do something terrible in Israel. It will make the ears of everyone who hears about it ring."

58 That's the time I will do everything to Eli and his family that I said I would. I will finish what I have started. 59 I told Eli I would punish his family forever. He knew his sons were sinning. He knew they were making fun of me. In spite of that, he failed to stop them."

60 "So I took an oath and made a promise to the family of Eli. I said, 'The sons of Eli's family will never be paid for by bringing sacrifices or offerings.'"

61 Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the LORD's house. He was afraid to tell Eli about the vision he had received. 62 But Eli called out to him. He said, "Samuel, my son."

63 Samuel answered, "Here I am."

64 "What did the LORD say to you?" Eli asked. "Don't hide from me anything. He told you. If you do, my God will punish you greatly."

65 So Samuel told him everything. He didn't hide anything from him.

## Did You Know?

How old was Samuel when God called him in the night?

3:6 Samuel was about 12 years old when God spoke to him. You don't have to be an adult to listen to God. You can be a child and obey God too.



Bible Lesson VIII: RESPONSIBILITY

King Joash & King Josiah



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## 2 Kings 10-11

a message all through Israel. All of those who served Baal came. Not a single one of them stayed away. They crowded into Baal's temple. It was full from one end to the other.

34Jehu spoke to the one who took care of the sacred robes. He told him, "Bring robes for everyone who serves Baal." So he brought the robes out for them.

35Then Jehu went into Baal's temple. Ahaziah, the son of Rezek, went with him. Jehu spoke to those who served Baal. He said, "Look around. Make sure that no one who serves the LORD is here with you. Make sure only those who serve Baal are here." 36So they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Jehu had stationed 80 men outside. He warned them, "I'm picking some men in your hands. Don't let a single one of them escape. If you do, you will pay for his life with yours."

37Jehu finished sacrificing the burnt offering. As soon as he did, he gave an order to the guards and officers. He commanded them, "Go inside and kill everyone. Don't let a single one of them escape."

So they cut them down with their swords. The guards and officers threw the bodies outside. Then they entered the most sacred area inside Baal's temple.

38They brought the sacred stones of Baal outside. They burned it up. 39So they destroyed Baal's sacred stone. They also tore down Baal's temple. People have used it as a public toilet to this very day.

40So Jehu destroyed the worship of the god Baal in Israel. 41But he didn't turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit those same sins. Jehu worshiped the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

42The LORD said to Jehu, "You have done well. You have accomplished what is right in my eyes. You have done to Ahab's royal house everything I wanted you to do. So your sons after you will sit on the throne of Israel. They will rule until the time of your children's grandchildren."

43But Jehu wasn't careful to obey the law of the LORD. He didn't obey the God of Israel with all his heart. He didn't turn away from the sins of Jeroboam. Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit those same sins.

44In those days the LORD began to make the kingdom of Israel smaller. Hazael gained control over many parts of Israel.

He gained control over all of their territory west of the Jordan River. It included the whole land of Gilead from Arzor by the Atmon River valley all the way to Bashan. That was the territory of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh.

45The other events of Jehu's rule are written down. Everything he did and accomplished is written down. All of those things are written in the official records of the kings of Israel.

46Jehu joined the members of his family who had already died. His body was buried in Samaria. His son Jehonadab became the next king after him. 47Jehu had ruled over Israel in Samaria for 28 years.

## Athaliah and Joash

Athaliah was Athaliah's mother. She was the daughter of King Jehoram and the sister of Ahaziah. She stole Joash away from among the royal princes. All of Joash were about to be murdered. She put Joash and his nurse in a bedroom. That's how she hid him from Athaliah. And that's why Athaliah didn't kill him. 48The child remained hidden with his nurse at the LORD's temple for six years. Athaliah ruled over the land during that time.

49In the seventh year the priest Jehoiada sent for the commanders of companies of 100 men. They were the commanders over the Carites and guards. He had them brought to him at the temple of the LORD. He made a covenant with them. Then he showed them the king's son.

50He gave them a command. He said, "Here's what you must do. There are five thousand of you. Some of you are in the three companies that are going on duty on the Sabbath day. A third of you must guard the royal palace. A third of you must guard the gate that is behind the gate. All of you must take turns guarding the temple. You must take turns guarding the temple."

51The rest of you are in the other two companies. Normally you are not on duty on the Sabbath. But you also must guard the temple for the king. Station yourselves around the king. Each man must

have his weapon in his hand. Anyone else who approaches your companies must be put to death. Stay close to the king so that he won't be taken away from you. The priest Jehoiada ordered: Each commander got his men and came to the palace. Some of the men were going on duty on the Sabbath day. Others were going on duty on the Sabbath day.

52Jehoiada gave weapons to the commanders. He gave them spears and shields. The weapons that belonged to King David. They had been in the LORD's temple. 53The guards stationed themselves around the new king. Each man had his weapon in his hand. They were near the altar and the temple. They stood from the south side of the temple to its north side. Their line formed half of a circle.

54Jehoiada brought Athaliah's son out. He put the crown on him. He gave him a copy of the covenant. And he announced that Joash was king. Jehoiada and his sons stood next to him. The people clapped their hands. Then they shouted, "May the king live a long time!"

55Athaliah heard the noise the guards and the people were making. So she went to the people at the LORD's temple. 56She looked and there was the king! He was standing next to the pillar. That was the usual practice. The officers and trumpet players were standing outside the king. All of the people of the land were filled with joy. They were blowing trumpets.

57Then Athaliah tore her royal robes. She called out, "Treason! It's treason!" 58The priest Jehoiada gave an order to the commanders of the troops. They were in charge of the troops. He said to them, "Bring her away from the temple because she's trying to kill the king. The priest Jehoiada ordered: Each commander got his men and came to the palace. Some of the men were going on duty on the Sabbath day. Others were going on duty on the Sabbath day.

59Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people. He had the king and people promise that they would be the LORD's people. Jehoiada also made a covenant between the king and the people.

60All of the people of the land went to Baal's temple. They tore it down. They smashed to pieces the altars and the statues of gods. They killed Mattan in front of the altar. He was the priest of Baal.

61Then the priest Jehoiada stationed guards at the temple of the LORD. He took with him the commanders of companies of 100 men. They were the commanders over the Carites and guards. He also took with him all of the people of the land. All of them brought the new king down from the throne. They went into the palace. Joash's temple. They went through the gate of the guards. Then the king sat down on the royal throne.

62All of the people of the land were filled with joy. And the city was quiet. That's because Athaliah had been killed with a sword at the palace.

63Joash was seven years old when he became king.

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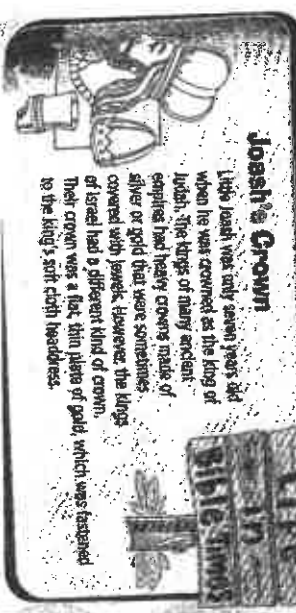
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77All of the people of the land were filled with joy. And the city was quiet. That's because Athaliah had been killed with a sword at the palace.

78Joash was seven years old when he became king.

## Joash's Crown

Like Joash was only seven years old when he was crowned as the king of Judah. The things of many ancient peoples had heavy crowns made of silver or gold that were sometimes covered with jewels. However, the kings of Israel had a different kind of crown. Their crown was a flat, thin plate of gold, which was fastened to the king's soft cloth headband.





**Joash Repairs the Temple**

**12** Joash became king of Judah. It was in the seventh year of Jehu's rule, Joash ruled in Jerusalem for 40 years. His mother's name was Zibiah. She was from Beersheba.

Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. He lived that way as long as the priest Jehoiada was teaching him.

But the high places weren't removed. The people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.

Joash spoke to the priests. He said, "Collect all of the money the people bring as sacred offerings to the LORD's temple. That includes the money that is collected when the men who are able to serve in the army are counted. It includes the money that is received from people who make a special promise to the LORD. It also includes the money people bring to the temple just because they want to."

Let each priest receive the money from one of the people who are in charge of the temple's treasures. Let all of that money be used to repair the temple where it needs it."

It was now the 23rd year of King Joash. And the priests still hadn't repaired the temple. So the king sent for the priest Jehoiada and the other priests. He asked them, "Why aren't you repairing the temple where it needs it? Don't take any more money from the people who are in charge of the treasures. Instead, hand it over so the temple can be repaired."

The priests agreed that they wouldn't collect any more money from the people. They also agreed that they wouldn't repair the temple themselves.

The priest Jehoiada got a chest. He drilled a hole in its lid. He placed the chest beside the altar for burnt offerings. The chest was on the right side as people enter the LORD's temple. Some priests guarded the entrance. They put into the chest all of the money the people brought to the temple.

From time to time there was a large amount of money in the chest. When that happened, the royal secretary and the high priest came. They counted the money the people had brought to the temple. Then they put it into bags.

After they added it all up, they used it to repair the temple. They gave it to the men who had been put in charge of the work. Those men used it to pay the workers. They paid the builders and those who worked with wood. They paid those who cut stones and those who laid them. They bought lumber and blocks of stone. So they used the money to repair the LORD's temple. They also paid all of the other costs to make the temple like new again.

The money the people brought to the LORD's temple wasn't used to make silver bowls. It wasn't used for wick cutters, sprinkling bowls or trumpets. And it wasn't used for any other articles made out of gold or silver. Instead, it was paid to the workers. They used it to repair the temple. The royal secretary and the high priest didn't require a report from those who were in charge of the work. That's because they were completely honest. They always paid those who brought guilt offerings and sin offerings. But it wasn't taken to the LORD's temple. It belonged to the priests.

About that time Hazael, the king of

Aram, went up and attacked Gath. Then he captured it. After that, he turned back to attack Jerusalem.

About Joash, the king of Judah, didn't want to go to war. So he got all of the sacred objects. They had been set apart to the LORD by the kings who had ruled over Judah before him. They were Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah. Joash got the gifts he himself had set apart. He got all of the gold that was among the temple treasures. He also got all of the gold from the royal palace. He sent all of those things to Hazael, the king of Aram. Then Hazael pulled his army back from Jerusalem.

The other events of the rule of Joash are written down. Everything he did is written down. All of those things are written in the official records of the kings of Judah.

The officials of Joash made evil plans against him. They killed him at Beth Millo. It happened on the road that goes down to Silo. The officials who murdered him were Zabad and Jehozabad. Zabad was the son of Shimeath. Jehozabad was the son of Stomer.

After Joash died, his body was buried in the family tomb in the City of David. His son Amaziah became the next king after him.

**Jehoshaphat Becomes King of Israel**

Jehoshaphat became king of Israel in Samaria. It was in the 23rd year of Joash, the king of Judah. Jehoshaphat ruled for 17 years. Jehu was the son of Ahaziah. Jehu was the son of Jehu.

Jehoshaphat did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He committed the sins Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had committed. Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit those same sins. Jehoshaphat didn't turn away from them.

So the LORD's anger burned against Israel. For a long time he kept them under the power of Hazael, the king of Aram. He also kept them under the power of his son Ben-Hadad.

Then Jehoshaphat asked the LORD to show him the way. The LORD listened to him. The LORD saw how badly the king of Aram was treating Israel. The LORD provided someone to save Israel. And they escaped from the power of Aram. So the people of Israel lived in their own homes, just as they had before.

But the people didn't turn away from the sins of the royal house of Jeroboam. He had caused Israel to commit those same sins. The people continued to commit them. And the pole that was used to worship the goddess Asherah remained standing in Samaria.

The army of Jehoshaphat had almost nothing left. All it had was 50 horsemen, 10 chariots and 10,000 soldiers on foot. The king of Aram had destroyed the rest of them. He had made them the dust at threshing time.

The other events of the rule of Jehoshaphat are written down. Everything he did and accomplished is written down. All of those things are written in the official records of the kings of Israel.

Jehoshaphat joined the members of his family who had already died. His body was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoram became the next king after him.

**Jehoram Becomes King of Israel**

Jehoram became king of Israel in Samaria. It was in the 37th year that Joash was king of Judah. Jehoram ruled for 16 years. He was the son of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoram did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He didn't turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit those same sins. And Jehoram continued to commit them.

The other events of the rule of Jehoram are written down. Everything he did and accomplished is written down. That includes his war against Amaziah, the king of Judah. All of those things are written in the official records of the kings of Israel.

Jehoram joined the members of his family who had already died. His body was buried in the royal tombs in Samaria. Jeroboam became the next king on Israel's throne after him.

Elisha was suffering from a sickness. Later he would die from it. Jehoram, the king of Israel, went down to see him. He sobbed over him. "My father!" he cried. "You are like a father to me! You are the true chariot and horsemen of Israel!"

Elisha said to Jehoram, "Get a bow and some arrows." So he did.

Hold the bow in your hands," Elisha said to the king of Israel. So Jehoram took hold of the bow. Then Elisha put his hands on the king's hands.

**A Church Building Program**

How would you like to be a king or queen at your age? Second Kings 12:1-12 tells us that Joash became king of Judah when he was only seven years old! But he wasn't too young to show that he loved God and God's house. He told the priests to collect the money the people brought to the temple. It was used to repair the temple. Does your church need repairs? How can you help here are some ideas.

1. Wash cars.
2. Rake leaves or sweep a garage.
3. Collect things for a garage sale.
4. Bake and sell cookies dough or sub sandwiches.



anger is burning against us. That's because our people before us didn't obey the words of this scroll. They didn't do everything that is written there about us."

14 The priest Hilkiah went to speak to the prophet Isaiah. So did Ahikam, Asaph, Shephai and Jashai. Hilkiah was the wife of Shailum. Shailum was the son of Tikvah. Tikvah was the son of Hatanah. Shailum took care of the secret robes. Hilkiah lived in the New Quarter of Jerusalem.

15 He said to them, "The LORD is the God of Israel. He says, 'Tell the man who sent you to me, 16 "The LORD says, 'I am going to bring horrible trouble on this place and its people. Everything that is written in the scroll the king of Judah has read will take place.'"

17 "That is because the people have deserted me. They have burned incense to other gods. They have made me very angry because of the statues of gods their hands have made. So my anger will burn against this place. The fire of my anger will not be put out."

18 The king of Judah sent you to ask the LORD for advice. Tell him, 'The LORD is the God of Israel. He has a message for you about the things you heard. He says, 19 "Your heart was tender. You made yourself low in my sight. You heard what I spoke against this place and its people. I said they would be under a curse. I told them they would be destroyed. You wore your royal robes and sobbed. And I have heard you."

20 "You will join the members of your family who have already died. Your body will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all of the trouble I am going to bring on this place."

Hilkiah's answer was taken back to the king.

### Joshua Promises to Follow the Covenant

21 Then the king called together all of the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. The king went up to the LORD's temple. The people of Judah and Jerusalem went with him. So did the priests and prophets. All of them went, from the least important of them to the most important.

The king had all of the words of the Scroll of the Covenant read to them. The scroll had been found in the LORD's temple.

### Did You Know?

What was the Scroll of the Covenant?

22:2 It was probably the book of Deuteronomy (page 204). A covenant is a promise. Josiah and the people promised to do what God had told them. Then God could bless Judah.



23 The king stood next to his pillar. He agreed to the terms of the covenant in front of the LORD. He promised to follow him and obey his commands, directions and rules. He promised to obey them with all his heart and with all his soul. So he agreed to the terms of the covenant that were written down in that scroll. Then all of the people committed themselves to the covenant.

24 Certain articles that were in the LORD's temple had been made to honor the god Baal and the goddess Asherah and all of the stars in the sky. The king ordered the high priest Hilkiah to remove those articles. He ordered the priests who were under him and the men who guarded the doors to help Jerusalem. Josiah burned them in the fields in the Kidron Valley. And he took the ashes to Bethel.

25 He got rid of the priests who served other gods. The kings of Judah had appointed them to burn incense. They burned the incense on the high places of the towns of Judah. And they burned it on the high places around Jerusalem. They burned incense to Baal and the sun and moon. They burned it to honor all of the stars.

26 Josiah removed the Asherah pole from the LORD's temple. It had been used to worship Asherah. He took it to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem. There he burned it. He ground it into powder. And he scattered it over the graves of the ordinary people.

27 He also tore down the rooms where the male temple prostitutes stayed. Those rooms were in the LORD's temple. The women had made cloth for Asherah in them. Josiah brought all of the priests from

the towns of Judah and destroyed the high places. He destroyed them from Geba all the way to Beersheba. The priests had burned incense on them. Josiah broke down the high places at the gates. That included the high place at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua. It was on the left side of one of Jerusalem's gates. Josiah was the city governor.

28 The priests of the high places didn't serve at the LORD's altar in Jerusalem. In spite of that, they ate with the other priests. All of them ate bread that was made with our yeast.

29 Josiah destroyed the high places at Bethel in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He didn't want anyone to use them to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to the god Molech.

30 He removed the statues of horses from the entrance to the LORD's temple. The kings of Judah had set them apart to honor the sun. The statues were in the courtyard. They were near the room of an official named Nathan-Melech. Josiah burned the chariots that had been set apart to honor the sun.

31 He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had set up. They had put them on the palace roof near the upstairs room of Ahaz. Josiah also pulled down the altars Ahaz had built. They were in the two courtyards of the LORD's temple. Josiah removed the altars from there. He smashed them to pieces. Then he threw the broken pieces into the Kidron Valley.

32 The king also destroyed the high places that were east of Jerusalem. They were at the southern end of the Mount of Olives. They were the ones Solomon, the king of Israel, had built. He had built a high place for worshipping Asherah. She was the evil goddess of the people of Sidon. Solomon had also built one for worshipping Chemosh. He was the evil god of Moab. And Solomon had built one for worshipping Molech. He was the god of the people of Ammon. The LORD hated that god.

33 Josiah smashed the sacred stones. He cut down the poles that were used to worship the goddess Asherah. Then he covered all of those places with human bones.

34 There was an altar at Bethel. It was at the high place that had been made by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit sin. Even that altar and high place were destroyed by Josiah.

He burned the high place. He ground it into powder. He also burned the Asherah pole. Then Josiah looked around. He saw the bones that were on the side of the hill. He had the bones removed from them. And he burned them on the altar to make it "unclean." That's what the LORD had said would happen. He had spoken that message through a man of God. The man had announced those things long before they took place.

35 The king asked, "What's that stone on the grave over there?"

The men of the city said, "It marks the tomb where the body of a man of God is buried. He came from Judah. He spoke against the altar at Bethel. He announced the very things you have done to it."

36 "Leave it alone," Josiah said. "Don't let anyone touch his bones."

37 So they spared his bones. They also spared the bones of the prophet who had come from the northern kingdom of Israel. Josiah did in the rest of the northern kingdom the same things he had done at Bethel. He removed all of the small temples at the high places. He made them "unclean." The kings of Israel had built them in the towns of the northern kingdom. The people in those towns had made the LORD very angry.

38 Josiah killed all of the priests of those high places on the altars. He burned human bones on the altars. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

39 The king gave an order to all of the people. He said, "Celebrate the Passover Feast to honor the LORD, your God. Do what is written in this Scroll of the Covenant."

40 The Passover Feast like that one had not been held for a long time. There hadn't been any like it since the days of the judges who led Israel. And there hadn't been any like it during the whole time the kings of Israel and Judah were ruling.

41 King Josiah celebrated the Passover in Jerusalem to honor the LORD. It was in the 18th year of his rule.

42 And that's not all. Josiah got rid of those who got messages from people who had died. He got rid of those who talked to the spirits of the dead. He got rid of the statues of family gods and the statues of other gods. He got rid of everything else the LORD hates that was in Judah and Jerusalem. He did it to carry out what the law required. That law was written in the scroll

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the priest Hilkiah had found in the Lord's temple.

25 There was no king like Josiah either before him or after him. None of them turned to the Lord as he did. He followed the Lord with all his heart and all his soul. He followed the Law of Moses; he required that everything the Lord had said be done. In spite of that, the Lord didn't turn away from his burning anger. He blazed out against Judah. That's because of every- thing Manasseh had done to make him very angry.

26 So the Lord said: "I will remove Judah from my land. I will do to them what I did to Israel. I will turn my back on Jerusalem. It is the city I chose. I will also turn my back on this temple. I spoke about it. I said, 'I will put my Name here.'" (1 Kings 8:29)

27 The other events of the rule of Josiah are written down. Everything he did is written down. All of those things are written in the official records of the kings of Judah.

28 Pharaoh Neco was king of Egypt. He marched up to the Euphrates River. He went there to help the king of Assyria. It happened while Josiah was king. Josiah marched out to meet Neco in battle. When Neco saw him at Megiddo, he killed him. Josiah's servants brought his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem. They buried his body in his own tomb. Then the people of the land went and got Jehoahaz. They anointed him as king in place of his father Josiah.

### Jehoahaz Becomes King of Judah

1 Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king. He ruled in Jerusalem for three months. His mother's name was Hamutal. She was the daughter of Jeremiah. She was from Libnah.

2 Jehoahaz did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He did just as the kings who had ruled before him had done. 3 Pharaoh Neco put him in chains at Riblah in the hand of Hamath. That kept him from ruling in Jerusalem. Neco made the people of Judah pay him a tax of almost four tons of silver and 75 pounds of gold.

4 Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim king in place of his father Josiah. He changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz with him to Egypt. And that's where Jehoahaz died.

5 Jehoahaz paid Pharaoh Neco the sil-

Jehoiakim taxed the land. He forced the people to give him the silver and gold. He made each one pay him what he required.

### Jehoiakim Becomes King of Judah

1 Jehoakim was 25 years old when he became king. He ruled in Jerusalem for 11 years. His mother's name was Zedekiah. She was the daughter of Nathan. She was from Ramath.

2 Jehoakim did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He did just as the kings who had ruled before him had done.

24 During Jehoakim's rule, Nebuchadnezzar marched into the land and attacked it. He was king of Babylon. He became Jehoakim's master for three years. But then Jehoakim decided he didn't want to remain under Nebuchadnezzar's control.

25 The Lord sent robbers against Jehoakim from Babylon, Aram, Moab and Ammon. He sent them to destroy Judah. That's what the Lord had said would happen. He had spoken that message through his servants the prophets.

26 Those things happened to Judah in keeping with what the Lord had commanded. He brought enemies against his people in order to remove them from his land. He removed them because of all of the sins Manasseh had committed. He had spilled the blood of many people who weren't guilty of doing anything wrong. In fact, he spilled so much of their blood that he filled Jerusalem with it. So the Lord refused to forgive him.

27 The other events of the rule of Jehoakim are written down. Everything he did is written down. All of those things are written in the official records of the kings of Judah.

28 Jehoakim joined the members of his family who had already died. His son Jehoiachin became the next king after him.

29 The king of Egypt didn't march out from his own country again. That's because the king of Babylon had taken so much of his territory. That territory reached from the Wood of Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River.

### Jehoiachin Becomes King of Judah

1 Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became king. He ruled in Jerusalem for three months. His mother's name was Neustaba-

She was the daughter of Elnathan. She was from Jerusalem.

2 Jehoachin did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He did just as his father Jehoakim had done.

3 At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, marched to Jerusalem. They surrounded it and got ready to attack it. 4 Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city. He arrived while his officers were attacking it.

5 Jehoachin, the king of Judah, handed himself over to him. Jehoachin's mother did the same thing. And so did all of his attendants, nobles and officials.

6 The king of Babylon took Jehoachin away as his prisoner. It was in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule.

7 He removed all of the treasures from the Lord's temple. He also removed all of the treasures from the royal palace. He took away all of the gold articles that Solomon, the king of Israel, had made for the temple. That's what the Lord had announced would happen.

8 Nebuchadnezzar took all of the people of Jerusalem to Babylon as prisoners. That included all of the officers and fighting men. It also included all of the skilled workers. The total number of prisoners was 10,000. Only the poorest people were left in the land.

9 Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoachin to Babylon as his prisoner. He also took the king's mother from Jerusalem to Babylon. And he took Jehoachin's wives, his officials and the most important men in the land.

10 The king also forced the whole army of 7,000 soldiers to go away to Babylon. Those men were strong and able to go to war. And the king forced 1,000 skilled workers to go to Babylon.

11 Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoachin's uncle Matthan king in his place. And he changed Matthan's name to Zedekiah.

### Zedekiah Becomes King of Judah

1 Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king. He ruled in Jerusalem for 11 years. His mother's name was Hamutal. She was the daughter of Jeremiah. She was from Libnah.

2 Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. He did just as Jehoachin had done. 3 The enemies of Jerusalem and Judah attacked them because the Lord was angry. In the end he threw them out of his land.

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## Did You Know?

What happened to the nation of Judah?

24:20 Judah's last kings were evil. They led the people away from God. God had to punish them. So God let the Babylonians attack them. Jerusalem was wiped out. Some of the people were taken to Babylon. Other people ran away to Egypt.



25:17 Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. He marched out against Jerusalem. All of his armies went with him. It was in the ninth year of the rule of Zedekiah. It was on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar set up camp outside the city. He brought in war machines all around it. 21:11 He was surrounded until the 11th year of King Zedekiah's rule.

### Nebuchadnezzar Destroys Jerusalem

1 Zedekiah also refused to remain under the control of Nebuchadnezzar.

2 Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. He marched out against Jerusalem. All of his armies went with him. It was in the ninth year of the rule of Zedekiah. It was on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar set up camp outside the city. He brought in war machines all around it. 21:11 He was surrounded until the 11th year of King Zedekiah's rule.

3 By the ninth day of the fourth month, there wasn't any food left in the city. So the people didn't have anything to eat.

4 Then the Babylonians broke through the city wall. Judah's whole army ran away at night. They went out through the gate between the two walls that were near the king's garden. They escaped even though the Babylonians surrounded the city. Judah's army ran toward the Arabah Valley.

5 But the armies of Babylon chased King Zedekiah. They caught up with him in the flatlands near Jericho. All of his soldiers were separated from him. They had scattered in every direction.

6 The king was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah. That's where Nebuchadnezzar decided how he would be punished. 7 His men killed the sons of Zedekiah. They forced him to watch it with his own eyes. Then they poked out his eyes. They put him in bronze chains. And they took him to Babylon.

8 Nebuchadnezzar was an official of the king of Babylon. In fact, he was commander of the royal guard. He came to Jerusalem. It was in the 19th year that Nebuchadnezzar

## APPENDIX F

**APPENDIX F****POEMS**

It Couldn't Be Done

Children Learn What They Live

It Couldn't Be Done  
BY EDGAR ALBERT GUEST

Somebody said that it couldn't be done  
But he with a chuckle replied  
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one  
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.  
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin  
On his face. If he worried he hid it.  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it!

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;  
At least no one ever has done it;"  
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat  
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.  
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,  
Without any doubting or quiddit,  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,  
There are thousands to prophesy failure,  
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,  
The dangers that wait to assail you.  
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,  
Just take off your coat and go to it;  
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing  
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

**Children Learn What They Live**

If a child lives with criticism,  
He learns to condemn.  
If a child lives with hostility,  
He learns to fight.  
If a child lives with ridicule,  
He learns to be shy.  
If a child lives with jealousy,  
He learns to feel guilty.  
If a child lives with encouragement,  
He learns confidence.  
If a child lives with tolerance [open-mindedness],  
He learns to be patient.  
If a child lives with praise,  
He learns to appreciate.  
If a child lives with security,  
He learns to have faith.  
If a child lives with approval,  
He learns to like himself.  
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,  
He learns to find love in the world.



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